

DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR FREEBORN



University of Minnesota
Center for Community Studies and
Department of Landscape Architecture

1991

DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR FREEBORN

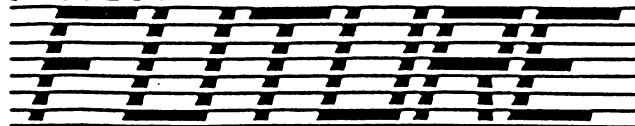
University of Minnesota
Center for Community Studies and
Department of Landscape Architecture

1991

Funding support for this project was provided through Project Future by the Minnesota Extension Service and through funding support of the Center for Community Studies by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs and the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

The Center for Community Studies and all of the students involved in this project would like to thank Pat Stumme of the Minnesota Extension Service, Mitch Shields, Ray Norrgard, and Rick Erpelding of the Department of Natural Resources, Mayor Cleone Dulas and all of the wonderful people of Freeborn who talked with us and shared with us their expectations, fears and hopes for the city of Freeborn.

PROJECT



Building Community Through People

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	6
 FREEBORN LAKE WATERSHED AREA	
Analysis.....	8
Design Strategies.....	10
A. The Restored Lake.....	10
B. The Town and Lake Partnership.....	12
Proposals	
1. South Freeborn Lake Trail System. (Fran Kiesling).....	14
2. Freeborn Lake Interpretive Canoe Trail. (Cole Burrell).....	20
3. Camp Freeborn. (Tim Clemens and Dave McCarty).....	23
4. Lake Front park In Downtown Freeborn. (Dave Ruoho).....	28
Conclusion.....	32
 FREEBORN: TOWN AND COUNTRYSIDE LINKS	
Analysis.....	34
Design Strategies.....	36
A. New Connections.....	36
B. Enhancing The Entry Image.....	36
Proposals	
1. West Entry. (Veronica Anderson and Elaine Brubaker).....	38
2. East Entry. (Veronica Anderson and Elaine Brubaker).....	42
3. Arrival Area. (Veronica Anderson and Elaine Brubaker).....	43
4. Butterfly Prairie. (Bill Ohland).....	46
5. Arrowhead Trail. (Bill Delaney and Luke Sydow).....	50
Conclusion.....	52
 THE CITY OF FREEBORN	
Analysis.....	54
Design Strategies.....	56
A. Public Greenways.....	56
B. Lake Theme Axis.....	56
Proposals	
1. Fifth avenue Beautification Project. (Ann Eberhart and Greg Ness).....	59
2. Town Park. (Norm Vork).....	62
3. Grain Elevator Landmark. (Vera Westrum).....	66
4. Railway Revival Walk. (Tom Whitlock).....	70
Conclusion.....	75

ARROWHEAD POINT COUNTY PARK

Analysis.....	76
Design Strategies.....	78
A. Natural History Discovery.....	79
B. Recreation Emphasis.....	80
C. Community Celebrations.....	81
Proposals	
1. Entry And Parking Lot. (Paul (P.J.) Anderson).....	83
2. Dance Pavilion. (Kris Williams).....	86
3. Woodland Ravine. (Lynnette Smith).....	89
4. North Shore Proposal. (Paul Yoshitomi).....	93
5. Peninsula As Pavilion. (Mary Jackson).....	96
Conclusion.....	98
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION.....	100

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Freeborn Lake Watershed Hydrology	9
Figure 2. Freeborn lake Ecological Restoration	11
Figure 3. Freeborn Lake Interpretive Trail	13
Figure 4. Southern Freeborn Revegetation Plan	15
Figure 5. Power Line Trail. Before and After	16
Figure 6. Cross-sections of four Trail Landscapes	17
Figure 7. Creation of Hunting Opportunities. Before and After	19
Figure 8. Freeborn Lake Interpretive Canoe Trail Plan	21
Figure 9. Interpretive Canoe Trail Vantage Points	22
Figure 10. Camp Freeborn activity Areas	24
Figure 11. Camp Freeborn Illustrative Master Plan	25
Figure 12. Cross-sections Through Camp Freeborn & Cobb River Dam	26
Figure 13. Views of the Camp Freeborn Landscape	27
Figure 14. Proposed relocation of County Road 29	28
Figure 15. Freeborn Lake Front Park. Concept and Illustrative Plans	29
Figure 16. Improvements For Freeborn Lake Front Park	31
Figure 17. Restoration of Freeborn Lake. Before and After	33
Figure 18. Analysis of Town and Countryside Links	35
Figure 19. Strategies for Town Entries and Edges	37
Figure 20. Country Approach Signature Plantings	39
Figure 21. West Entry Images. Before and After	41
Figure 22. East Town Entry. Before and After	42
Figure 23. Freeborn Arrival Area. Existing	43
Figure 24. Proposed Corn Drive Commons and Harvest Moon Park	45
Figure 25. Cross-section of Butterfly Prairie	46
Figure 26. Existing conditions of Butterfly Prairie Area	47
Figure 27. Proposed Plantings & Trail at Butterfly Prairie Area	49
Figure 28. Cross-sections of Sunset Dock & Oak Lookout	50
Figure 29. Arrowhead Trail Location Map	51
Figure 30. Images Along Proposed Arrowhead Trail	53
Figure 31. City of Freeborn Basemap	55
Figure 32. Design Strategies for Town Open Space improvements	57
Figure 33. Locations of Town Open Space Improvement proposals	58
Figure 34. 5th Avenue. The commercial & Civic Heart of Freeborn	59
Figure 35. 5th Avenue Beautification. Before and After	61
Figure 36. Freeborn Park Plan. Before and After	63
Figure 37. Outdoor Stage Proposed for Town Park	64
Figure 38. View Towards Town Park. Before and After	65
Figure 39. The Grain Elevator as a Community Symbol & Landmark	66
Figure 40. The Grain Elevator as the Hub of the Community	67
Figure 41. Views of the Grain Elevator from Highway 29	68
Figure 42. Diagrammatic Cross-section Overlook & Surroundings	69
Figure 43. Entrance to Railway Revival Walk from 5th Avenue	70
Figure 44. Railway Revival Walk Plan	71
Figure 45. Typical design for Railway to Trailway Area	72
Figure 46. Proposed Trail Crossing of Park Street	72
Figure 47. Proposed School Trail Along Football Field	73

Figure 47. Proposed School Trail Along Football Field	73
Figure 48. Proposed Trail at Edge of Agricultural Fields	73
Figure 49. Proposed Cemetery Trail	74
Figure 50. Analysis of Arrowhead Point County Park	77
Figure 51. Design Strategy A: Natural History Discovery.....	79
Figure 52. Design Strategy B: Recreation Emphasis	80
Figure 53. Design Strategy C: Community Celebrations	81
Figure 54. Locations of Proposals for Arrowhead point Park	82
Figure 55. Arrowhead Point Park Entry Proposal Plan	83
Figure 56. Park Entry Diagram and Cross-sections	84
Figure 57. Tree-lined entrance Road & view to Lake at Park Entry	85
Figure 58. Arrowhead point Park Dance Pavilion Plan	86
Figure 59. Existing Picnic Shelter Where Pavilion is Exposed	87
Figure 60. Plan and Cross Sections of Pavilion & Promenade	88
Figure 61. Woodland Ravine Area Plan	89
Figure 62. Woodland Ravine. Vegetation Analysis & Proposals	90
Figure 63. Cross- Sections of Woodland Ravine Area	91
Figure 64. Images of Enhanced Woodland Ravine Area	92
Figure 65. Arrowhead Point North Shore Trail Proposal	93
Figure 66. Cross Sections of Proposed North Shore Trail	94
Figure 67. Images Along Proposed North Shore Trail	95
Figure 68. View Out Peninsula Opening Towards Freeborn	96
Figure 69. Plan, Cross-section and Bird's-eye View of Peninsula	97
Figure 70. Council Ring & Point at Arrowhead Point Park	99

INTRODUCTION

PROJECT INITIATION AND PURPOSE

As part of Freeborn's effort to enhance the quality of the town and to better utilize Freeborn Lake as a resource, Freeborn Project Future applied to the University of Minnesota's Center for Community Studies (CCS) for design assistance. Through CCS, a University of Minnesota Department of Landscape Architecture class spent several weeks during winter 1991 investigating the potential for improvements in and around Freeborn with special attention to Freeborn Lake and its watershed. This report represents the culmination of the students' work and is presented to the people of Freeborn in hopes that the ideas will inspire the best future possible for the community.

PROJECT SCOPE

The role of the class project was to explore and illustrate the potential for community improvements in and around Freeborn. The project focused on the relationship of the people of Freeborn to their physical environment particularly Freeborn Lake. As part of the project the students thought about how the community has related to its environment over time, including:

- * the past (reasons for settlement of Freeborn and how it used its setting, and stories of the past relationship between the town and its environment),
- * the present (the special places of the town that express the community's relationship to the environment, community festivals etc.. that indicate relationships to the environment, the current status of Freeborn Lake, the town's lake edge, the environmental qualities, and uses of Arrowhead Point Park), and
- * the future (specific options for new facilities oriented to the lake, such as: lake edge in and adjoining the city of Freeborn including trail, piers, overlooks, interpretation: Arrowhead County Park including trail, camping interpretation).

The designs were done by a University of Minnesota landscape architecture class under faculty supervision by Professor Peter Olin and by registered landscape architect Margaret (Peggy) Sand. Twenty students participated in the project which began with a day long site visit to Freeborn on February 22nd including a town meeting (as shown in photographs on the facing page). The class worked in four teams gathering site information, investigating alternative strategies for the future, and developing specific design proposals to illustrate possible improvements. (The name(s) of the student who developed each proposal is listed behind each proposal in the table of contents.) Most students visited Freeborn more than once to increase their knowledge of the community. The projects were presented to the community on April 1. The results of the projects have been compiled into this report by student David Ruoho with assistance from student Elaine Brubaker and editing by Peggy Sand.



Town Meeting with University Students.

PART ONE. FREEBORN LAKE WATERSHED AREA

INTRODUCTION

Freeborn Lake - the most significant resource in northern Freeborn County - is directly linked with the city of Freeborn giving the community its distinct character. The lake, in turn, is directly linked to all the lands surrounding it. The lake influences the surrounding countryside and the land directly effects the quality of the lake. In particular, the lands which drain into Freeborn Lake are most critical in future changes and improvements to the Lake.

Thus, the first part of this report on future improvements for Freeborn and Freeborn Lake begins with an examination of the Freeborn Lake watershed area. Then a pair of alternative strategies for the future are presented and a series of specific project proposals.

ANALYSIS

The watershed area of Freeborn Lake covers 10,870 acres or 17 square miles. Figure 1 maps the estimated watershed as well as its inlets and outlets. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the lake surface area covers 2,008 acres or 3.1 square miles. The average water depth is 2-3 feet with some areas reaching as much as 6-7 feet. Annual runoff volume is estimated to be 5,871 acre-feet. These estimates are likely to change if further detailed studies more fully examine the roles of outlet structures, tile drainage and possible spring locations on the north side of the lake. One option for the future of the lake which DNR has discussed with the community includes a temporary process to draw down or remove most of the water from the lake in order to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. If a drawdown occurred, DNR has estimated that approximately one year may be needed for the lake to refill.

The plant communities surrounding Freeborn Lake are host to a variety of waterfowl and animals. Mallards, Wood ducks, Blue Wing Teals, Green Herons, Marsh Wrens and Yellowheaded Blackbirds nest around Freeborn Lake. Animals such as Red and Grey Foxes, Minks, Weasels, Badgers, Muskrats, Gophers and White Tailed Deer inhabit the surrounding lake area. Other animals seen migrating through the lake area are Tundra Swans, White Pelicans, California Gulls, Egrets, Common Loons and Monarch Butterflies. Also, birds of prey have been sighted such as Bald Eagles; Turkey Vultures; Osprey; Gray, Snowy and Horned Owls; and Marsh and Red Hawks. Currently, Freeborn Lake provides habitat for only rough fish.

The importance of Freeborn Lake to the people of Freeborn is reinforced in the community's vision of itself as articulated in the Project Future vision statement adopted by the community. Freeborn sees itself as changing from an agricultural town to a diversified community centered on the lake. In the vision statement comments are made that while the lake is scenic, the town ignores the lake. Aesthetics, improving water quality and maintaining the lake as a precious natural resource are identified as key concerns.

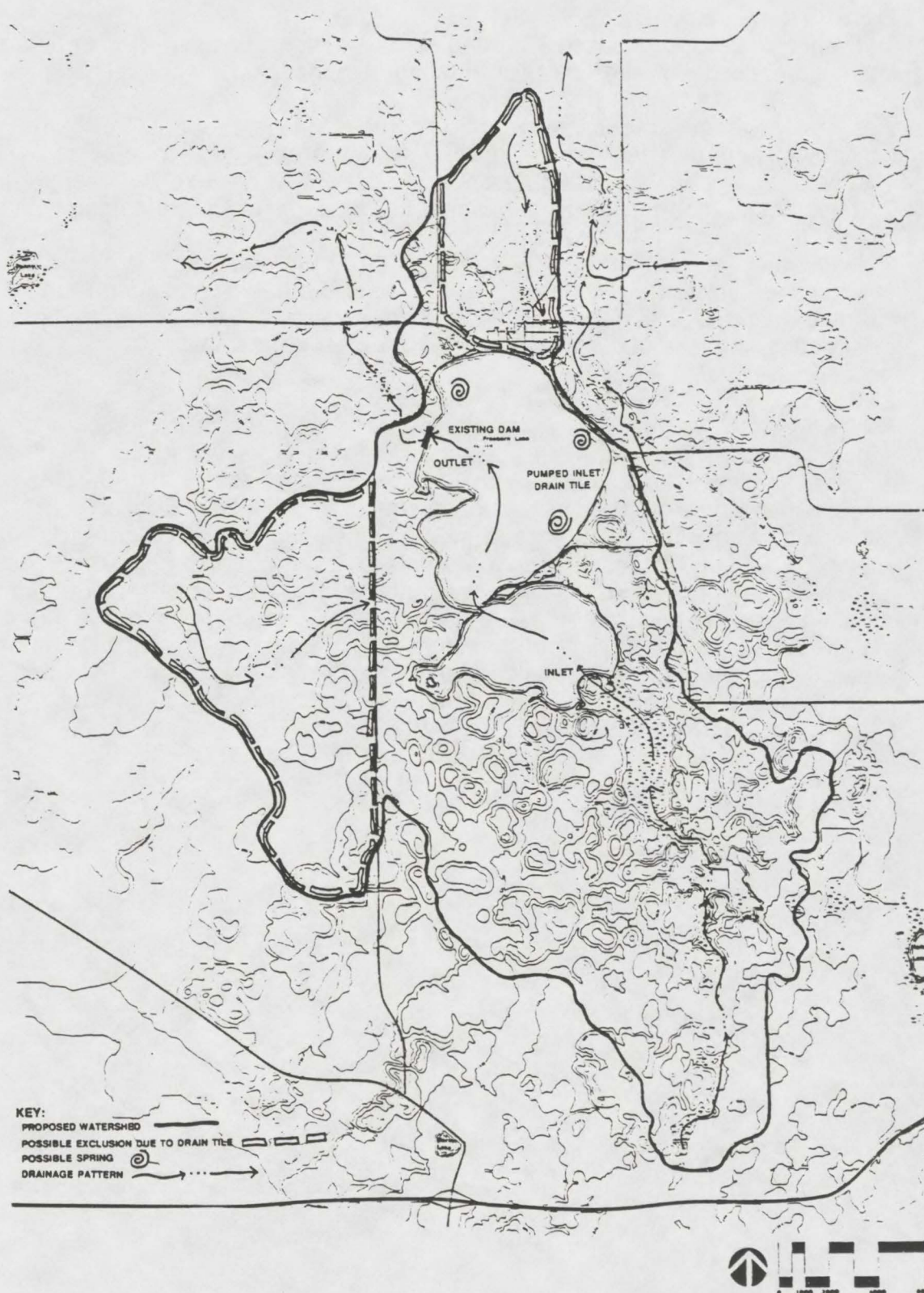


Figure 1. Freeborn Lake Watershed Hydrology.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

Two alternative approaches or strategies have been considered to enhance the interaction between the residents of Freeborn and the lake.

The first strategy emphasizes providing more quality habitats for game fish, waterfowl, and animals through restoration of the ecological balance of the lake. This would be achieved through a drawdown of the water level of Freeborn Lake. Through restoration the rough fish would be removed which would allow plants a chance to reestablish themselves.

The second scenario would leave the lake water as it is and focus on redesign of the lake shore near the town. Either approach could incorporate an interpretative trail bringing the lake and the community into closer partnership.

STRATEGY A. THE RESTORED LAKE

This approach would restore the shallow lake ecosystem in combination with added amenities for human recreation. Freeborn Lake would be restored to a healthy, shallow lake ecosystem by using a Department of Natural Resources process involving a draw-down and revegetation of the lake. Freeborn Lake could become a state wildlife designation area. Depending on the extent of the draw-down and subsequent management of the lake, the rough fish population could be reduced or eliminated, giving emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation the chance to become established. The environmental requirements of the vegetation and the existing wave action on this large lake should prevent cat tails and other vegetation from growing across the lake. Game fish could then be introduced. Figure 2 illustrates a probable extent of emergent vegetation such as cat tails which might grow out from the shore in a restored lake.

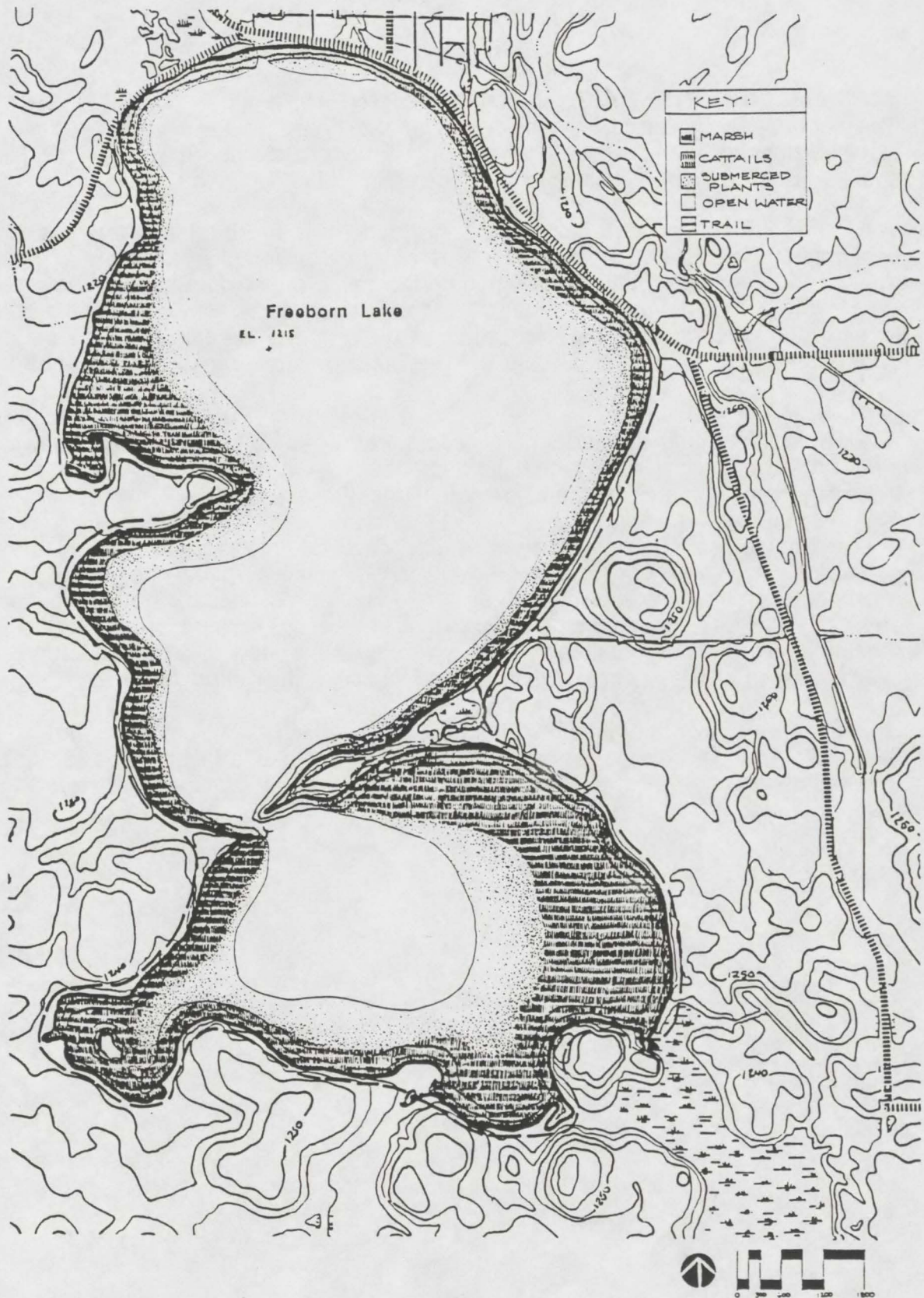


Figure 2. Freeborn Lake Ecological Restoration.

STRATEGY B. THE LAKE & TOWN PARTNERSHIP

The second design strategy considered for the Freeborn Lake watershed area involves bringing together the town and lake to form a stronger partnership. This could be done through several projects located in Figure 3.

Within the city of Freeborn, moving County Road 29 away from the lake shore and designating Park Street as the County Road could accomplish two goals. First, traffic through the downtown area could be increased providing a greater exposure to the town's commercial possibilities for visitors, prospective residents and investors. Second, moving the road away from the lakeshore, creates an opportunity for a better partnership between the town of Freeborn and Freeborn Lake.

The whole lake could be made more accessible to people by encircling it with an interpretive trail. In town, an historical market along the trail could depict the town's discovery, development and the colorful growth of the region.

The archaeological site on Arrowhead Point could be interpreted to illustrate the importance of Freeborn's location and the lake's history. Also, Arrowhead Point Park could provide more opportunities for recreation such as swimming, beach-oriented activities, day camp, picnicking, school activities and community and regional events. The south end of the lake is well suited to expose people to existing marsh and lake ecology with an explanation of their importance.

On the west edge of the lake, Oak Point (also called Hanson's Point) and the Cobb Creek Dam could provide a wonderful view of the lake and an opportunity to understand the role of the dam and the Cobb River in the past and future of Freeborn Lake. .

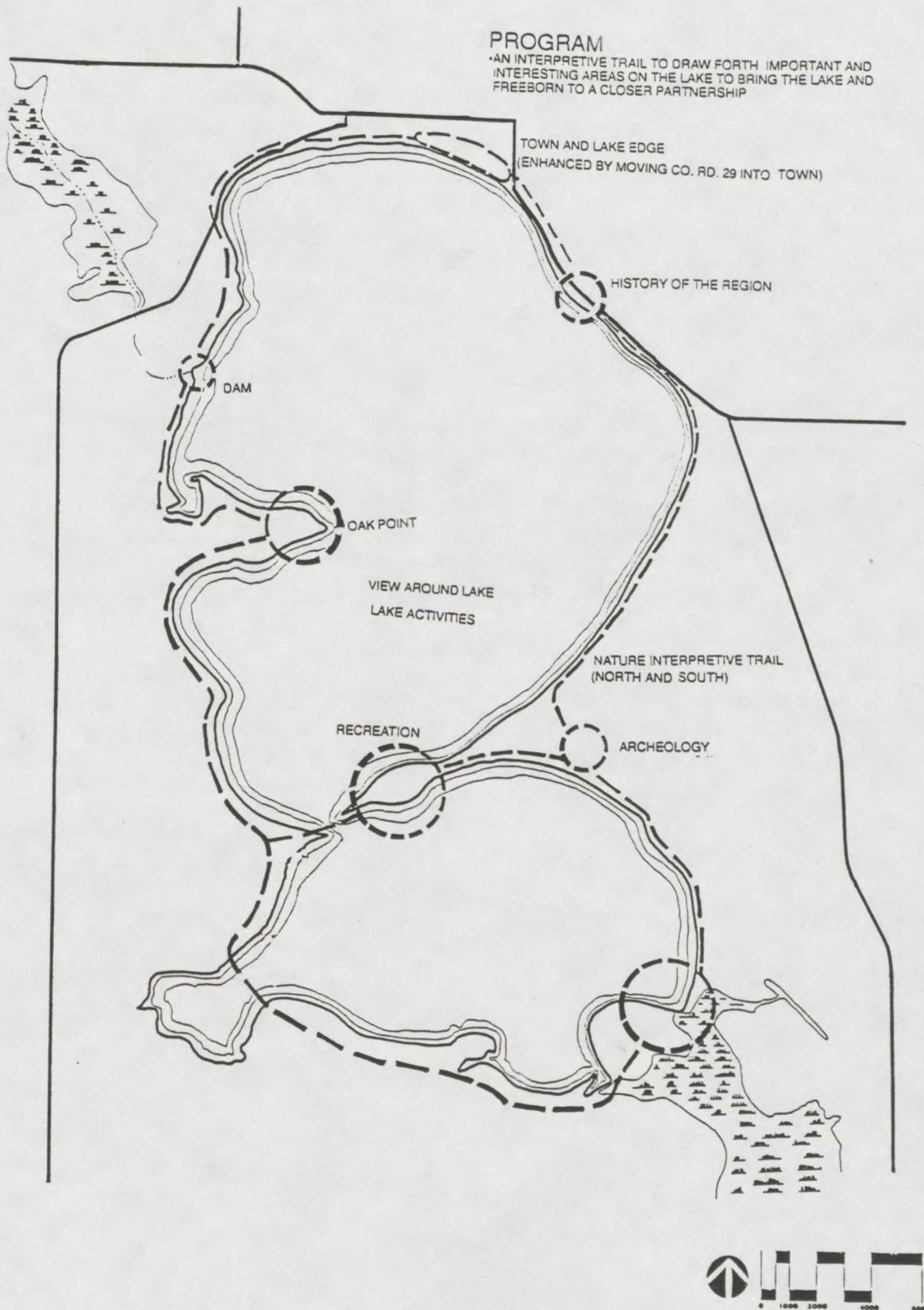


Figure 3. Freeborn Lake Interpretive Trail.

DESIGN PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL 1. SOUTH FREEBORN LAKE TRAIL SYSTEM

With lake restoration and regular stocking of game fish,, hunting and angling could be encouraged in the southern area of the lake. Pedestrian walks along the southern end of Freeborn Lake could increase opportunities for resident and visitor interaction with the natural systems of a restored ecologically balanced lake. The same trails could also provide better lake access for anglers and hunters. The proposed walks would create four distinct ways for people to experience the edges. between the different types of landscapes which are uniquely part of the Freeborn Lake watershed. The four walk loops are briefly described here, mapped in Figure 4, with Figure 6 showing the varied landscapes through which the trails pass.

- The County Park loop on the east edge of the lake would bring the visitor along the lake edge between trees and the lake.
- The Wetland loop at the southeast corner of the lake (just west of the Golf Course) would be a trail around the edge of a portion of a wetland. This walk has an observation deck nestled up against the land at the water's edge. A connection with the golf course could be provided.
- The Agriculture Loop would take people on the edges between fields and the lake and between fields and wetlands. The use of prairie buffer strips between the agricultural fields and the lake could improve the experience and lessen the impact of agricultural run-off.

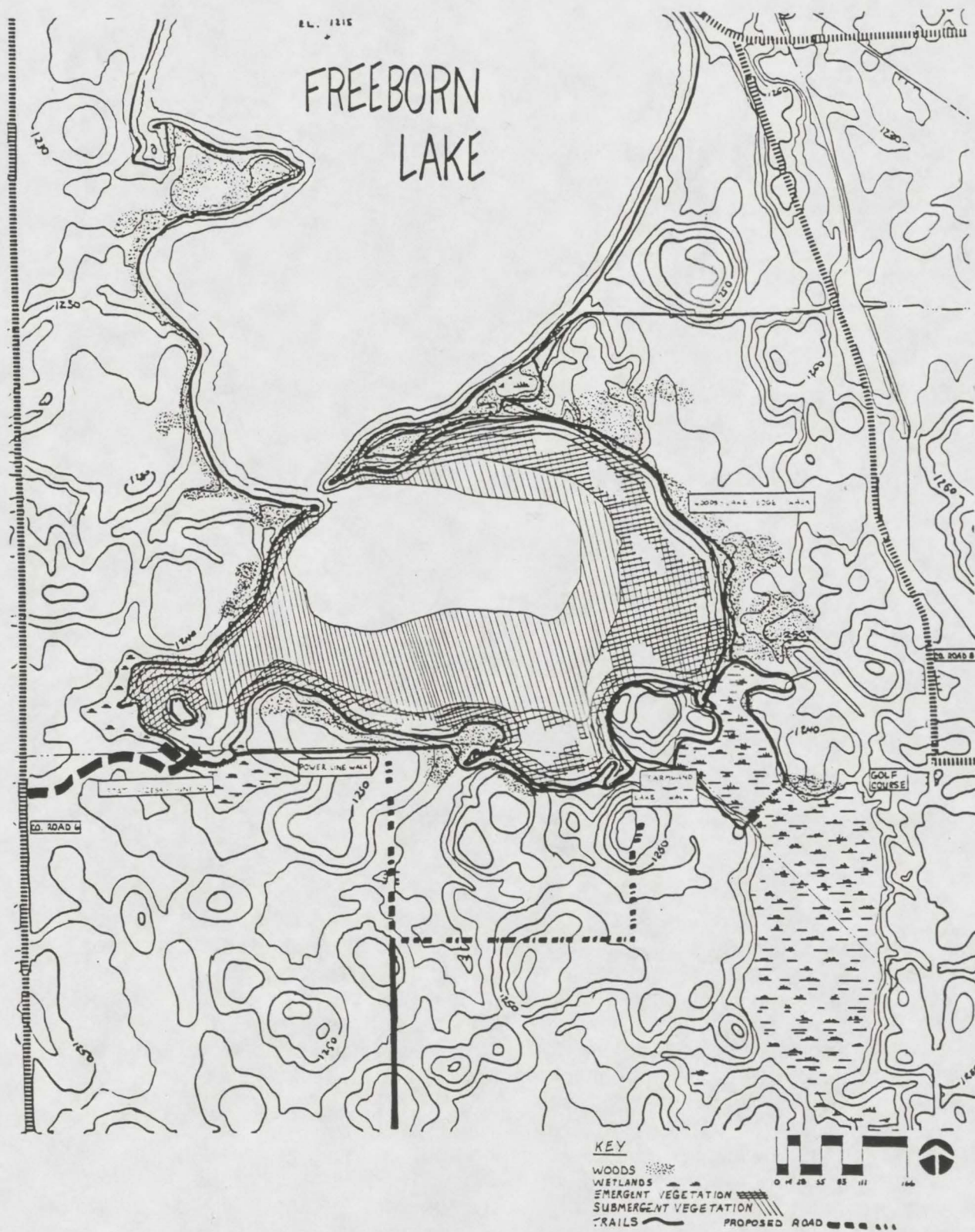


Figure 4. Southern Freeborn Lake Revegetation and Trail Plan.

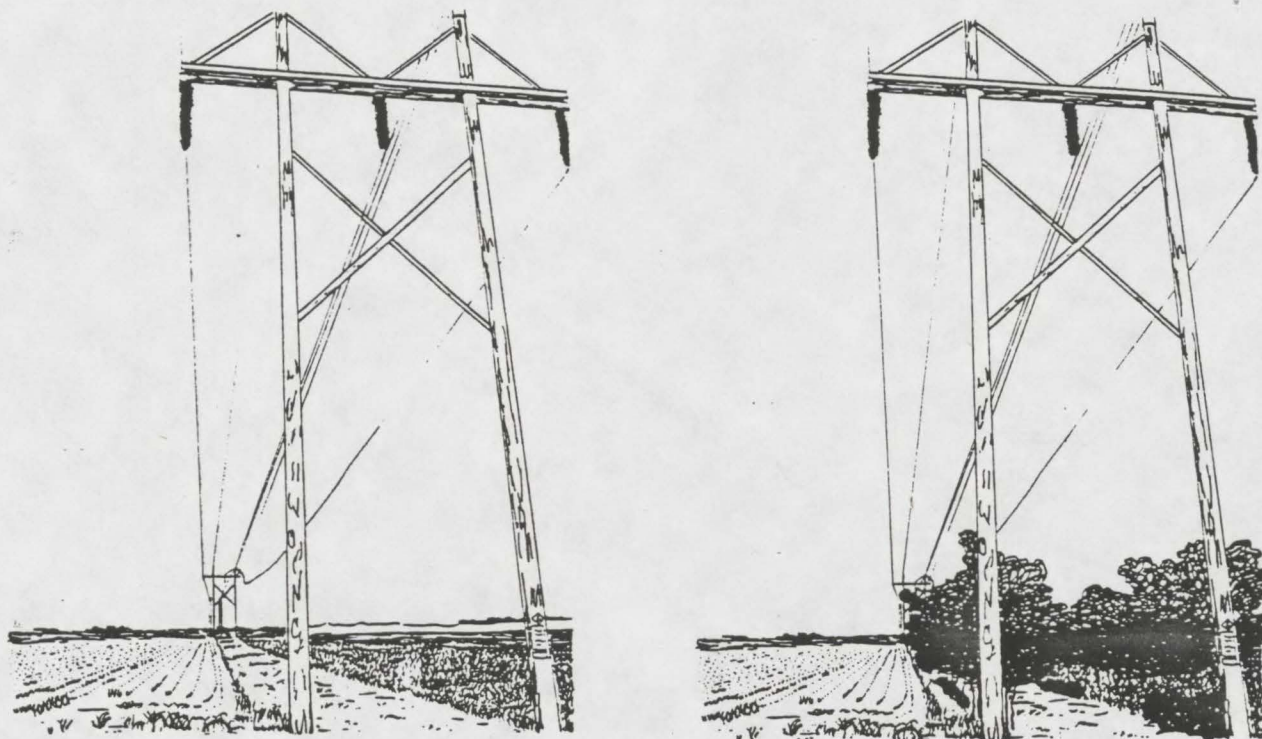


Figure 5. Power Line Trail. Before and After.

- The Power Line walk would start from the southern edge of the Agriculture Loop walk. This trail would lead the walker near the power lines that are shown in Figure 5 as planted with small native trees and large native shrubs. The loop would go west along the south edge of the lake and end at the proposed boat access for duck hunters and anglers. A small parking lot for five cars. could be located at this trail head. To get to the public boat access by car, a small, gravel road off County Road 6 is suggested.

On any of these walks, people could photograph, look around, reflect on the beauty of the landscape, and identify plants. Signs could help visitors understand the vegetation and the importance of lake restoration. In the lake, the emergent vegetation would need cutting periodically so critical areas of the water stay open for good views and near any beaches or docks. The range of potential shore edge experiences and the relative scale of native plants to the power lines are shown in the cross sections of Figure 6.

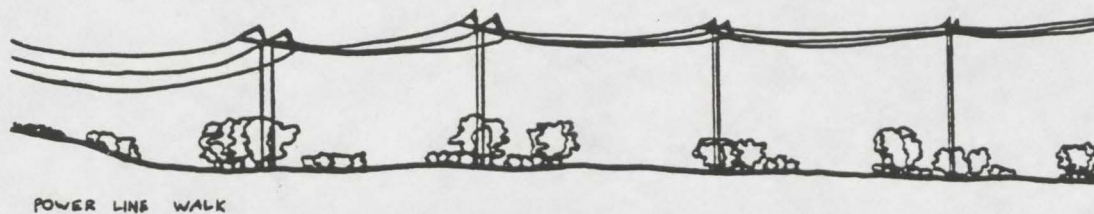
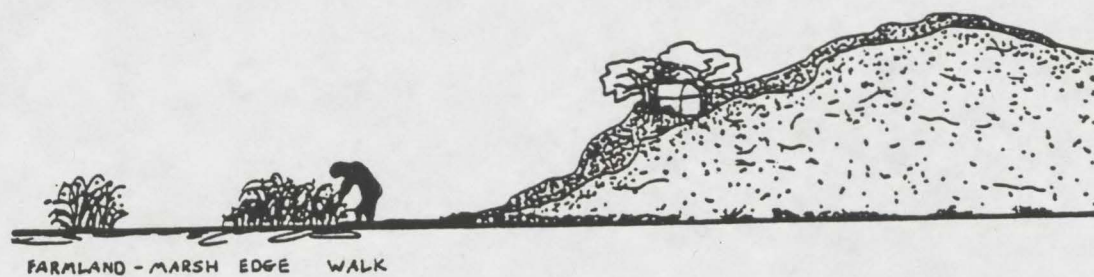
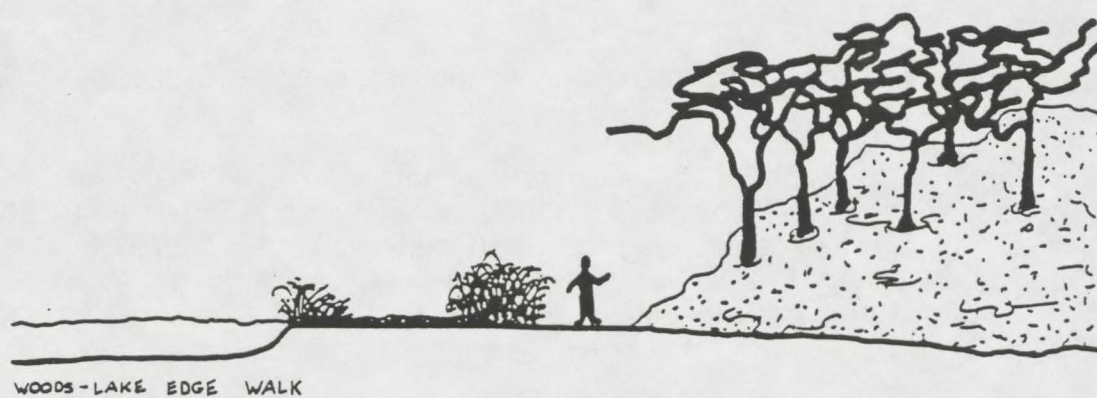


Figure 6. Cross-sections of Four Trail Landscapes.

Many methods exist of creating community support for changes in the look of a restored lake:

- Signs could be used to identify plant communities and tell visitors what lies ahead. Signs could reinforce the identify the lake as a Wildlife Designation area. Signs in the landscape could use language to both identify features and to encourage change in perceptions of the situation. Signs could also help visitors understand that they are not seeing "weeds" but are seeing what should be there.
- Boardwalks and observation platforms along the water edge and bordering various plant communities could provide new ways to experience the southern edge of Freeborn Lake and could provide open and close views of the lake.
- The rich colors and textures of masses of native wildflowers could be accentuated in places such as where the town and the lake edge meet and also water lilies could be introduced in some protected areas.
- Waterfowl including loons and Tundra Swans could be encouraged in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited and, public boat access for wildlife observation and hunting could be provided to the improved habitat areas in the southern end of the lake as illustrated in Figure 7.
- Selective cutting of lake vegetation could be used to increase the community's sense that they are controlling the image and function of the lake.
- A pride program could be initiated for those farmers with good conservation practices whose farmsteads border the lake.



Figure 7. Creation of Hunting Opportunities: Before and After.

PROPOSAL 2. FREEBORN LAKE INTERPRETIVE CANOE TRAIL

The purpose of an interpretive canoe trail would be to introduce the community and visitors to the varied ecosystems surrounding Freeborn Lake and to interpret the natural and cultural features of the landscape. From the vantage point of a canoe, visitors to Freeborn Lake would watch the shoreline unfold as they paddle by slowly through the many different wildlife and vegetation areas. This new perspective would allow people to enjoy Freeborn Lake's scenery and varied lush vegetation from the unique vantage point of the water.

With restoration of the lake, recreation and education could be enhanced through designation of a guided water trail system throughout the lake with interpretive and activity nodes at various points along the trail and with walking trails and information at the interpretive nodes. A potential alignment of the trail and locations for interpretive areas are indicated in Figure 8 and illustrated in Figure 9.

Interpretive areas could include:

- Agricultural land--explaining the history of the settlement and land use patterns.
- Indian settlement area--tracing the history of Indian settlements and and deciphering clues to their past community on the lake.
- Big woods area--interpreting the natural history of the big woods ecosystem.
- Marsh/Sedge Meadow boardwalk trail--interpreting the ecosystem and bird life.
- Dam site area--giving the history of the lake.
- Oak woodland--revealing the ecosystem of the area.
- Nature Camp--educating youth though nature and camping experiences.

Activity centers would include a bird blind, a swimming beach and a nature camp.

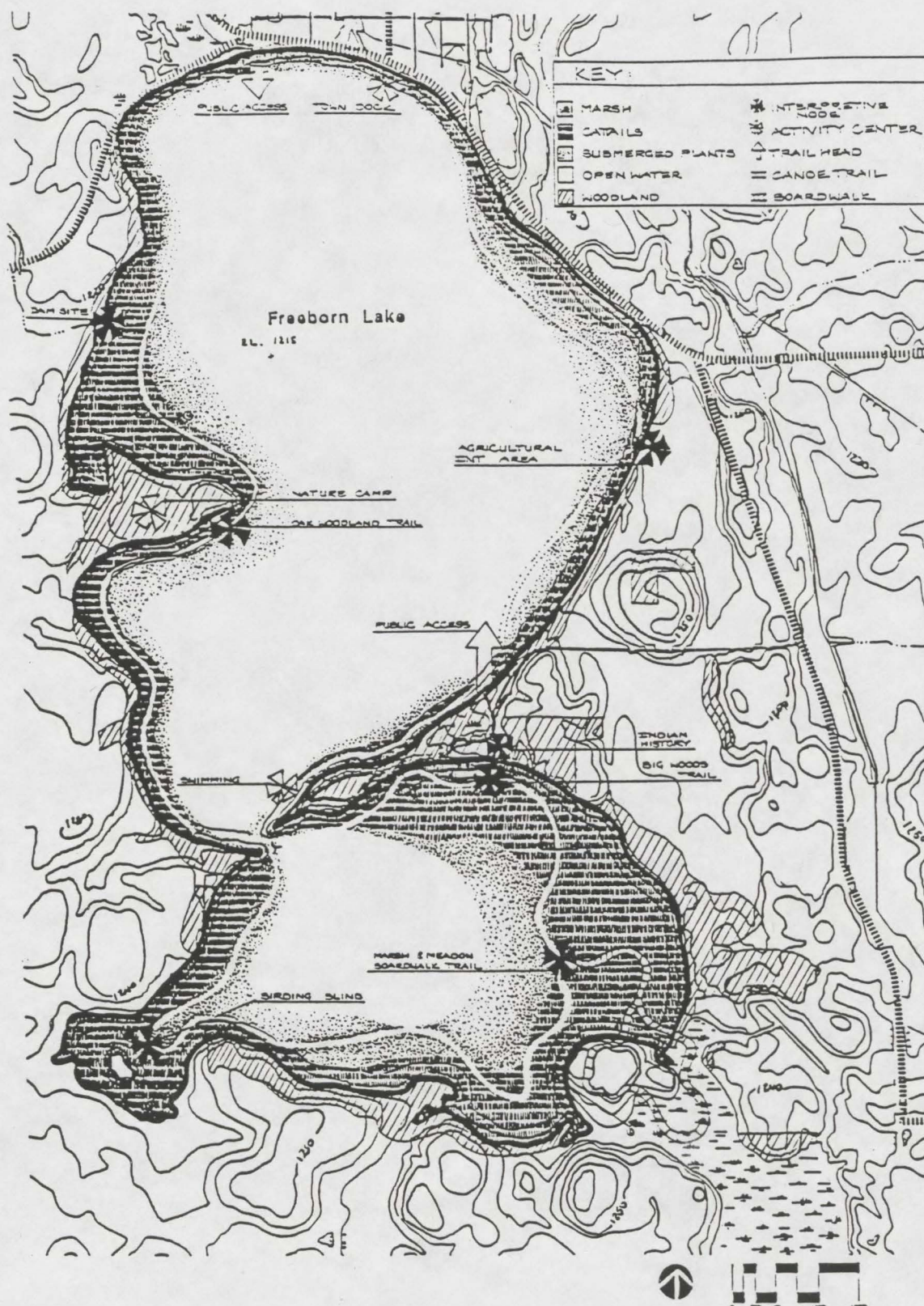


Figure 8. Freeborn Lake Interpretive Canoe Trail Plan.

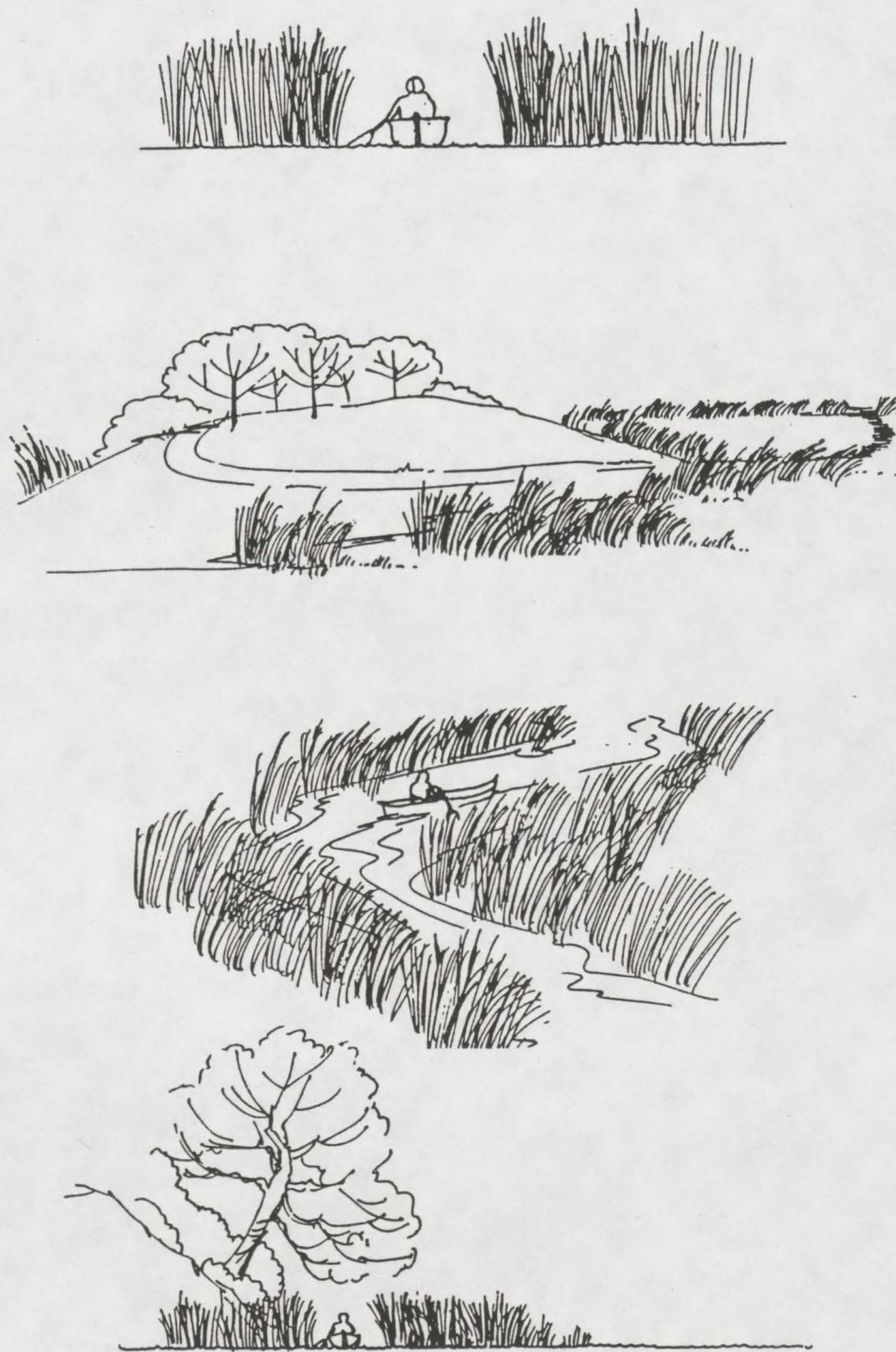


Figure 9. Interpretive Canoe Trail Vantage Points.

PROPOSAL 3. CAMP FREEBORN

Currently, the land called Hanson's Point is being farmed. But, in the future an ideal use of the land could be for a camp for kids - Camp Freeborn. The purpose of the camp would be to create habitats in which children learn and explore. This would facilitate an active relationship between the children of Freeborn and surrounding ecosystems in which they live. The proposed Camp Freeborn would entail activities for day and overnight use by elementary and secondary students. Educational activities could include studies of farm practices, wetland and aquatic ecosystems, woodland ecosystems, native prairie ecosystems and hydrology.

The community could be integrated with trails connecting the point to the proposed trail system encircling the lake. How activities could be organized on the site is suggested in Figure 10, illustrated in plan form in Figure 11, shown in overall and detail cross sectional studies in Figure 12, and visualized through a series of image studies in Figures 13. These images together demonstrate the rich combination of agricultural, woodland, stream, and lake resources at this one location.

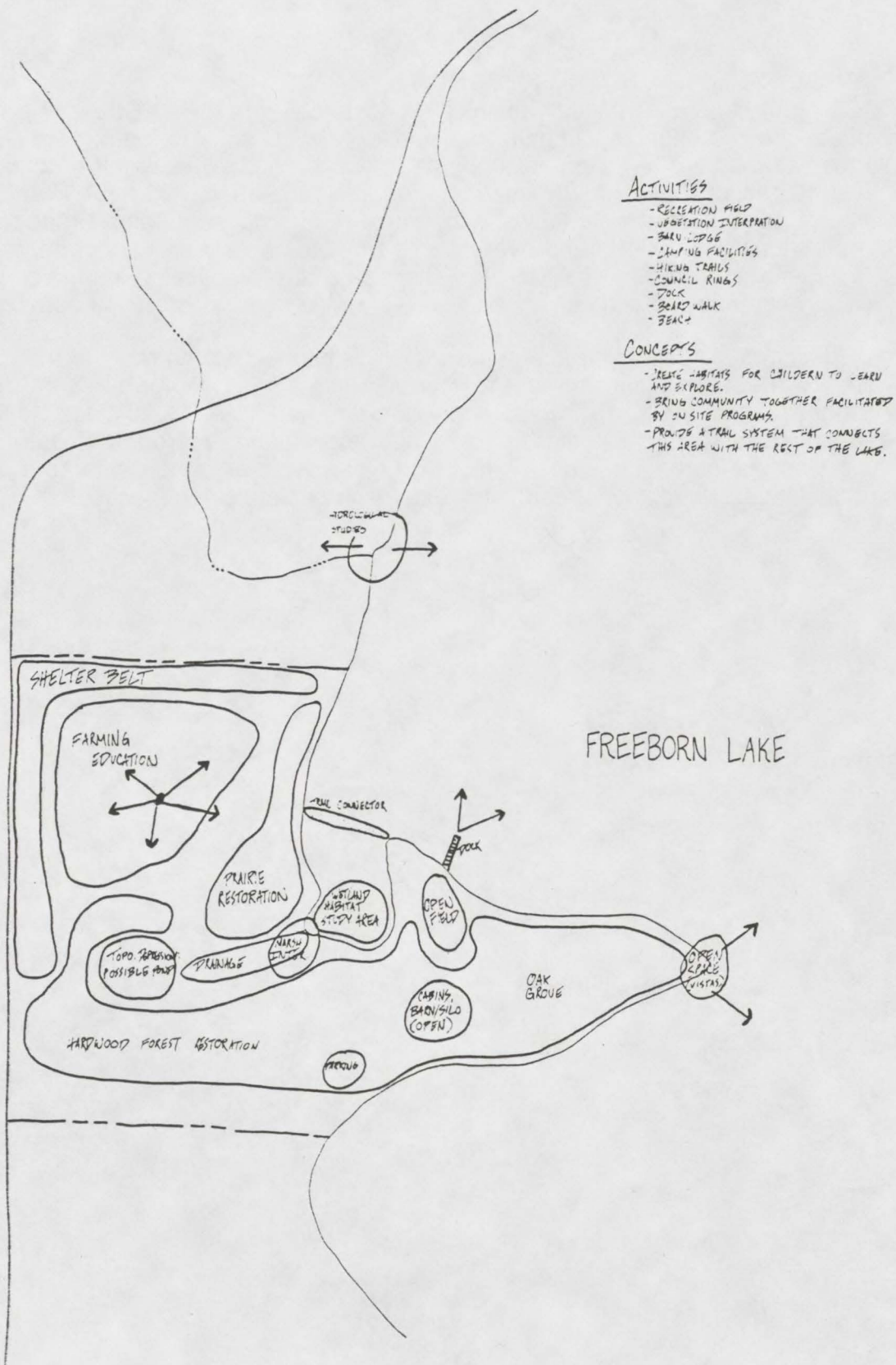
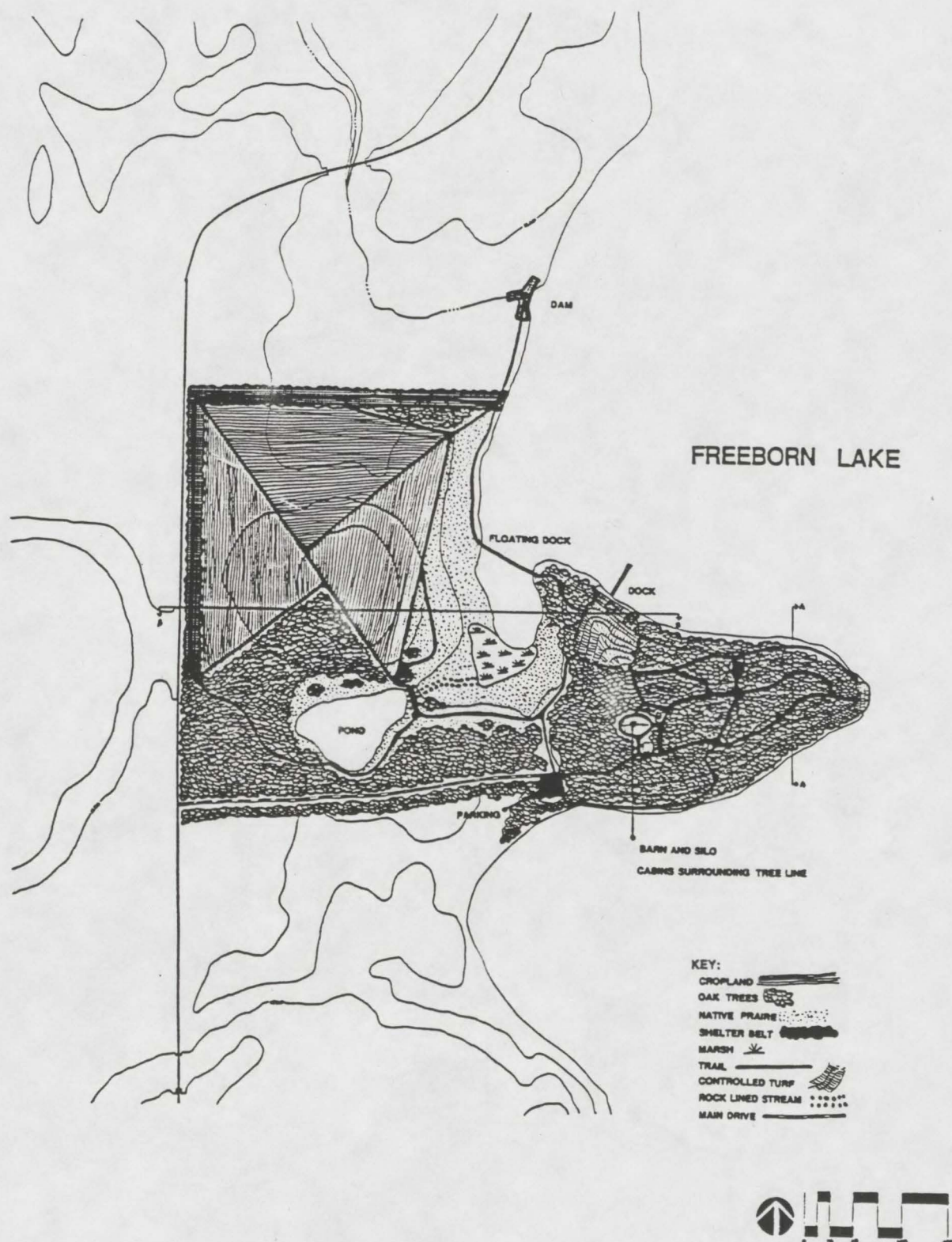


Figure 10. Camp Freeborn Activity Areas.



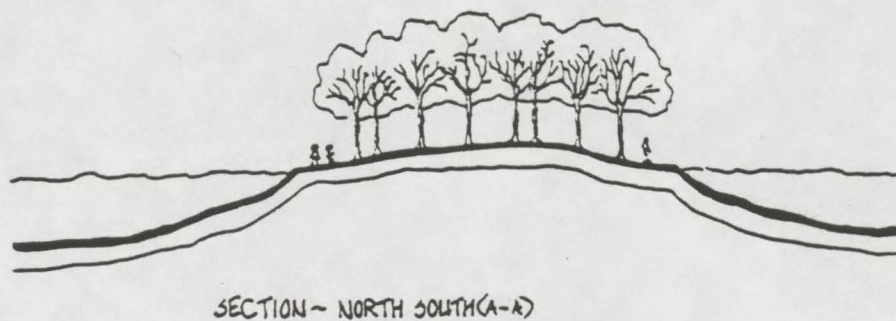
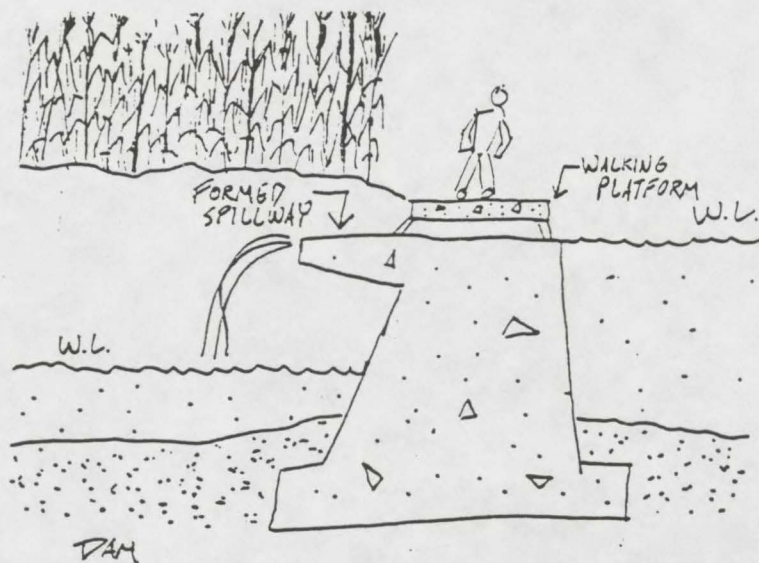


Figure 12. Cross-sections Through Camp Freeborn & Cobb River Dam.



Figure 13. Views of the Camp Freeborn Landscape.

PROPOSAL 4. LAKE FRONT PARK IN DOWNTOWN FREEBORN

To reinforce a more effective partnership between the city of Freeborn and Freeborn Lake, the attention of the city could be more directly focused to the lake. Even now the town and lake connection is strongest where 5th Avenue ends at the lake front and along the present alignment of County Road 29 between 3rd and 5th Avenues. Here residents and visitors alike can enjoy views of the lake and a physical closeness to the lake.

This proposal would reroute the County Road one block north on to Park Street as shown in Figure 14. The right-of-way of Park Street is wide enough to meet county highway standards, a greater number of businesses along Park Street would gain the extra traffic exposure, and with county highway designation, Park Street could be maintained with county-state aid funds. Two blocks of the existing road could then be reclaimed as park and open space lands as shown in the diagrammatic and illustrative plans in Figure 15.



Figure 14. Proposed Relocation of County Road 29.

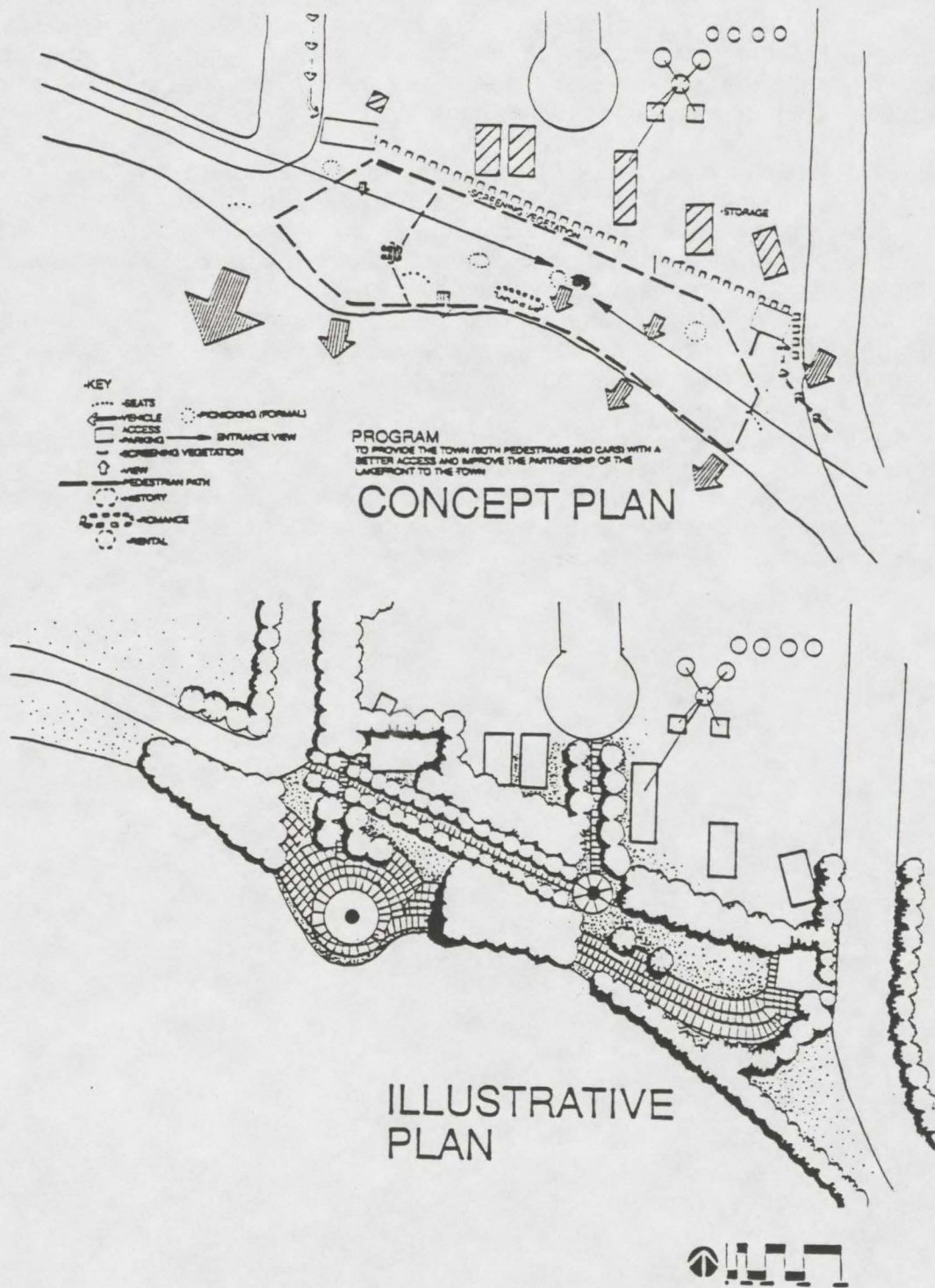


Figure 15. Freeborn Lake Front Park. Concept and Illustrative Plans.

A focal point in the proposed Lake front Park would be an historical marker linking the lake and town. The marker would be located and scaled to be visible to people entering Freeborn from the west and east. The marker would remind both residents and visitors of the pioneers that settled the Lake Freeborn area and the community's strong and proud agrarian past and future.

Three pedestrian walks would bring people walking along 3rd, 4th and 5th Avenues into the park. As shown in Figure 16 (top) rows of trees would be used to focus attention of key features of the community such as the grain elevator and on beautiful views of the lake. Park visitors could stroll among the trees, have a convenient picnic at one of many lakeview picnic tables, pause at a bench to enjoy the lake and watch as others using the water for swimming, wadding, boating or fishing. Clumps of trees would be punctuated by open spaces that act as windows from the edge of town looking out over the lake.

A small sidewalk cafe could occupy an overlook at the end of the 5th Avenue corridor emphasizing the strongest connection to the town at the location illustrated in Figure 16 (bottom). Here passersby and other casual users of the park could sit on cool summer evenings and warm autumn afternoons enjoying the breezes and reflections off the lake or the colors of the trees marking the passing time.

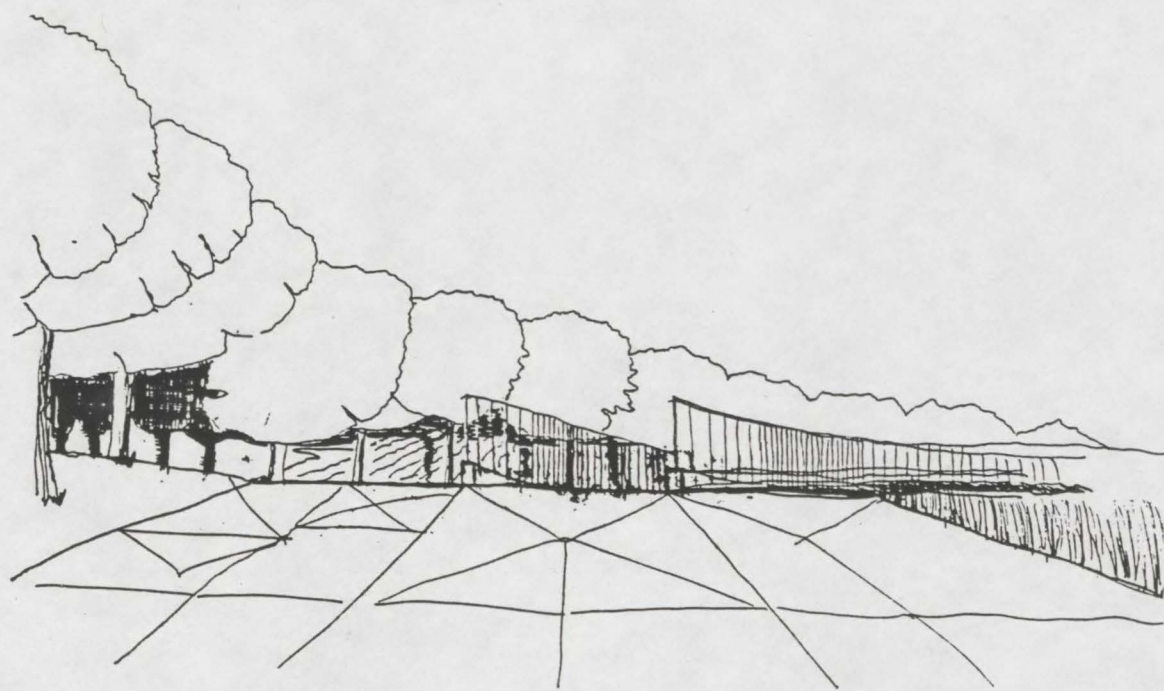


Figure 16. Improvements For Freeborn Lake Front Park.

CONCLUSION

The primary end result of a watershed and lake edge improvement strategy would be increase the attractiveness and usefulness of Freeborn lake for the community and its visitors. The lake's inherent beauty could be enhanced further by creating a more self-sustaining and ecologically diverse shore (Figure 17).



LAKE FREEBORN BEFORE RESTORING THE LOST SHORELINE



LAKE FREEBORN AFTER RESTORING THE LOST SHORELINE

Figure 17. Restoration of Freeborn Lake. Before and After.

PART TWO. TOWN AND COUNTRYSIDE LINKS

INTRODUCTION

Entries introduce visitors to the community. Along the roads and paths approaching a community, entries are the places where people feel like they have moved from one type of landscape to another, such as from "the country" to "the city". The visitor's first impression of a town occurs at critical entry points. Visual clues may be evident at an entry and provide information about the history of the town, the community's livelihood and where the central business district lies. Usually, the first impression is a lasting one.

Those places where the town meets the countryside or where the community meets the lake mark a clear transition from one type of land use to another. When an obvious boundary exists between different types of landscapes, designers call this boundary an edge.

This part of the Freeborn study explored Freeborn's entries and edges. The relationship between the town of Freeborn and the surrounding countryside as well as the town's relationship to the lakeshore was explored. Such an investigation becomes an exploration of edges. Each edge is a perceived line or seam that separates the countryside from the town and is often formed by landmarks, natural features or significant structures. The actual edges of a community and the physical and visual ways people experience them are important.

In exploring the approaches to Freeborn, the significant areas focused on were: the countryside approach on County Road 6 from Alden and Interstate 90; the west entry crossroads of County Road 6 and County Road 29 that runs between the town and along the lake; and the East town entry on County Road 29 coming in from Manchester. The perceived arrival area into downtown Freeborn occurs where the current Freeborn sign is located off 5th Avenue. along the lake.

The potential role of lands straddling the edge of the town of Freeborn and ways to increase pedestrian and bicycle linkages between the town and the countryside were also explored.

ANALYSIS

The map (Figure 18) summarizes the analysis of the area's linking Freeborn and the surrounding countryside. The analysis looked at a broad range of factors from topography, vegetation, and soils, to entries into town, signs and experiential qualities. Characteristics discovered were graceful, curving roadways; steep slopes; some soils inappropriate to near lakeshore trails due to wetness and steepness of slopes; scattered vegetation (including magnificent oak stands, native hardwoods, many scrub trees and undergrowth) with wonderful color and texture. More site specific analysis is discussed and sketches of existing conditions included with each of the proposals in this section

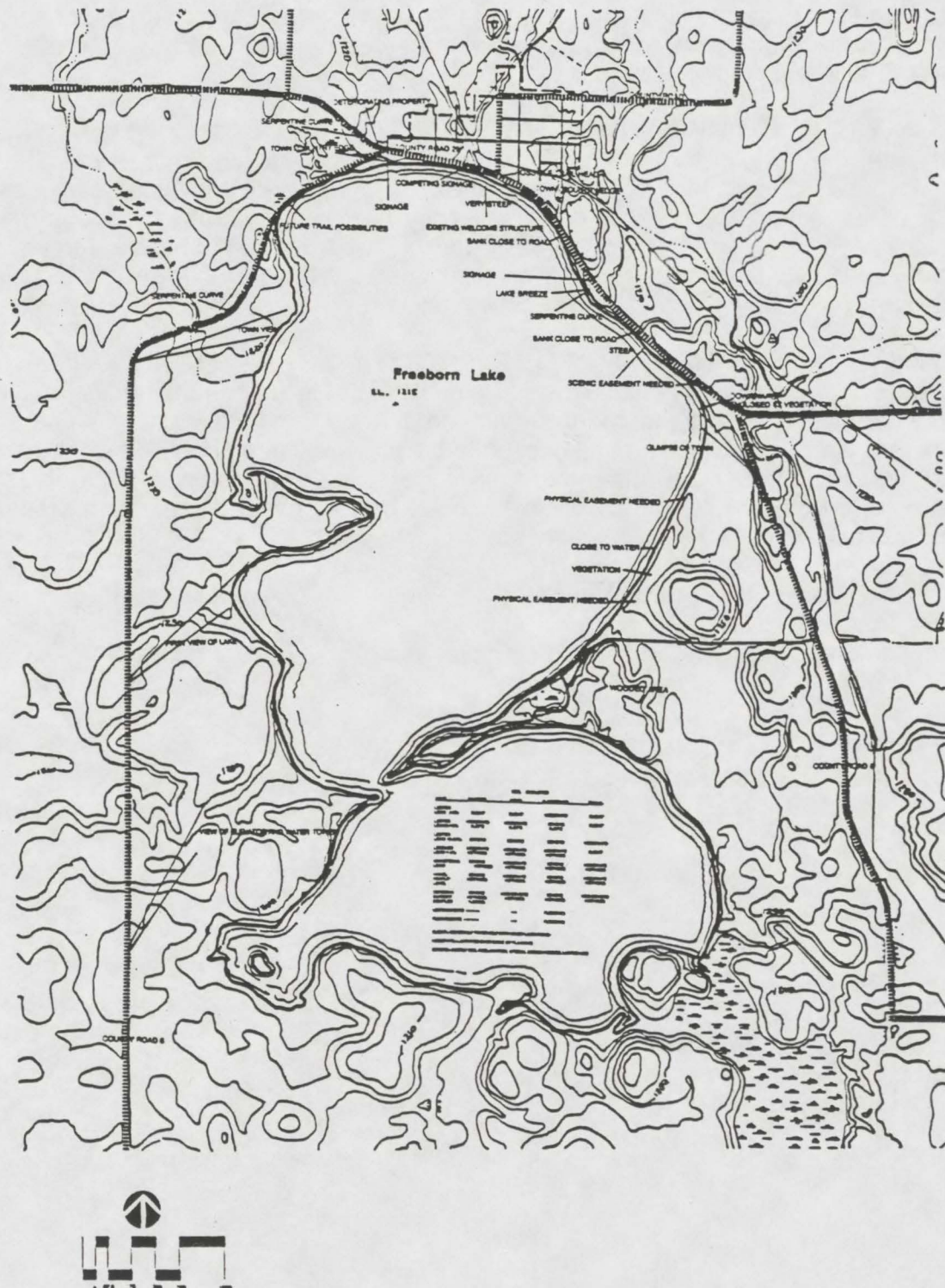


Figure 18. Analysis of Town and Countryside Links.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

Strategies for community improvement can look at ways to change how people move to and from town and countryside or they can emphasize how to change people's perceptions of community.

STRATEGY A. NEW CONNECTIONS.

One strategy explored how the community could create new routes or paths linking town and countryside. These might be considered "physical" changes that effect where people are and what they are doing. Examples would be creation of a new road or bicycle trail coming in to town. This type of strategy might also involve acquiring land on the edge of town and using it for a new purpose enhancing the link between town and country.

STRATEGY B. ENHANCING THE ENTRY IMAGE.

Another alternative strategy explored visual methods of enhancing the edge between the town and the country. In such a strategy people may continue to use the same routes and means coming to town as they use now. But what they see would be changed to improve the image of the community. This visual approach would encourage people to focus on places of beauty and visual interest and would screen unsightly areas.

An analysis of the opportunities for Freeborn to use these strategies in enhancing their town entries and edges are shown in Figure 19. The five proposals described here use a combination of both of these strategies.

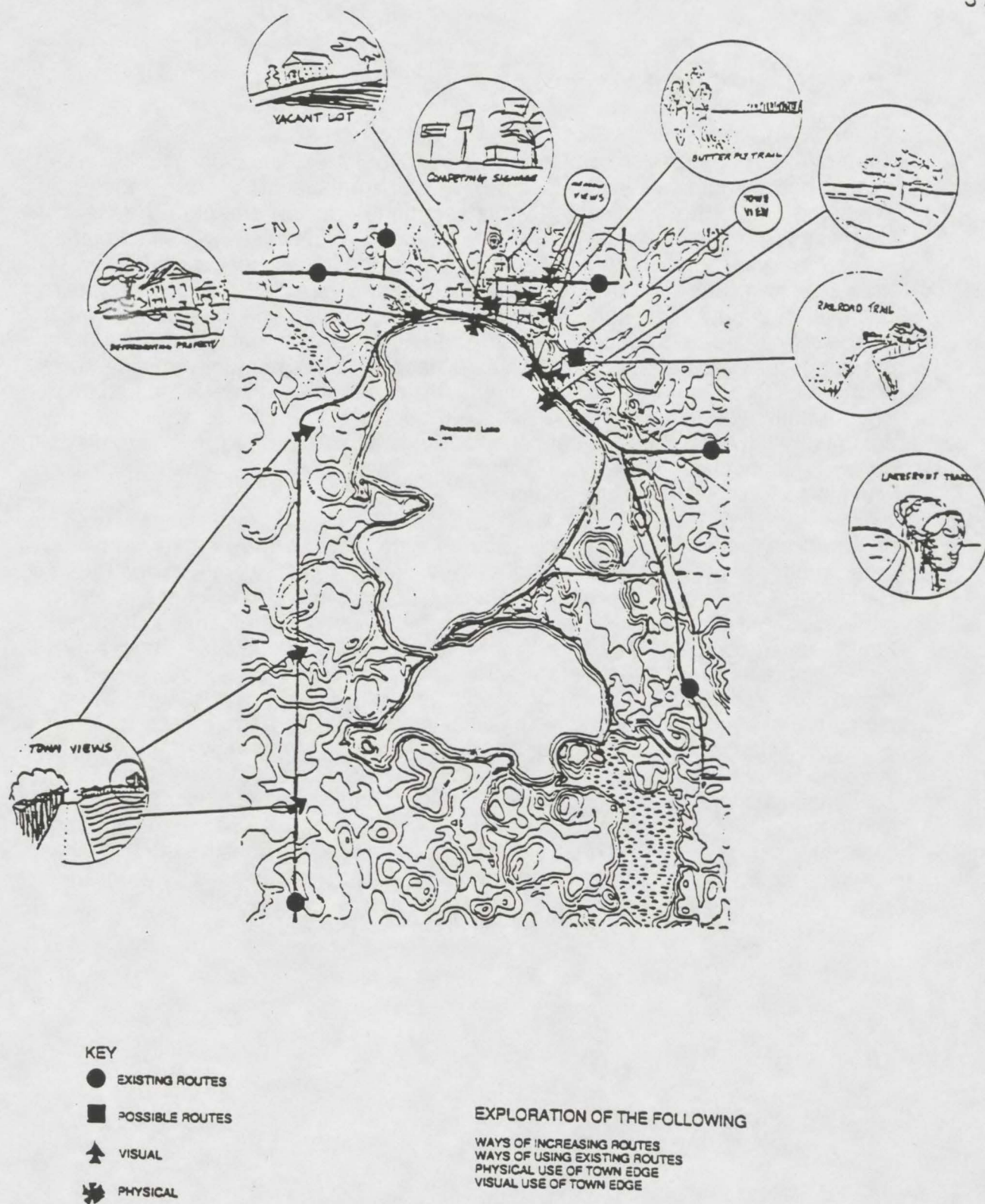


Figure 19. Strategies for Town Entries and Edges.

DESIGN PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL 1. WEST ENTRY

The approach to Freeborn on County Road 6 from Alden is so delightful with its peek-a-boo glimpses of the water tower and grain elevator hovering above the sweeping fields, that it deserves ways to emphasize and preserve the views. One way to do this is to use "signature plantings". When visually distinct plants (ones that are obviously different than their surroundings because of the way they are used) are used throughout a community in special locations they can become "signature plantings". A community could select one type of tree to be its community tree and one variety of flower to be its community flower. When groupings of these are used they could become the community's "signature planting". They could be used throughout a community at special landmarks. Then ideally whenever someone sees a grouping of the community trees and community flowers, they will subconsciously think about the positive aspects of the community. Thus signature plantings are plantings that become identifiable with the best features of a community.

In Freeborn's case, the lovely old Scotch Pine trees in the cemetery are so outstanding and wonderfully unique they would make excellent signature plantings. One way to use the signature plantings would be in locations along the entries into Freeborn where they can draw attention to the community's best features. Specifically, seven (or more) Scotch Pine trees could be planted running parallel to the road before some of the major views to Freeborn. This would work because of the way people typically look around when driving along a highway. When a view has been blocked off, people tend to keep waiting for the view to open. Once it does, the person really notices the view of the other side. Thus the planting of Scotch Pine would work in two ways. First, as signature plantings, the Scotch Pines will become identifiable with Freeborn. and second, the linear planting of them will entice the driver to notice the suddenly exposed view. Three examples where linear groups of Scotch Pine would be appropriate as these dual purpose signature plantings are shown (not to scale) in Figure 20. Additional areas could also be considered.

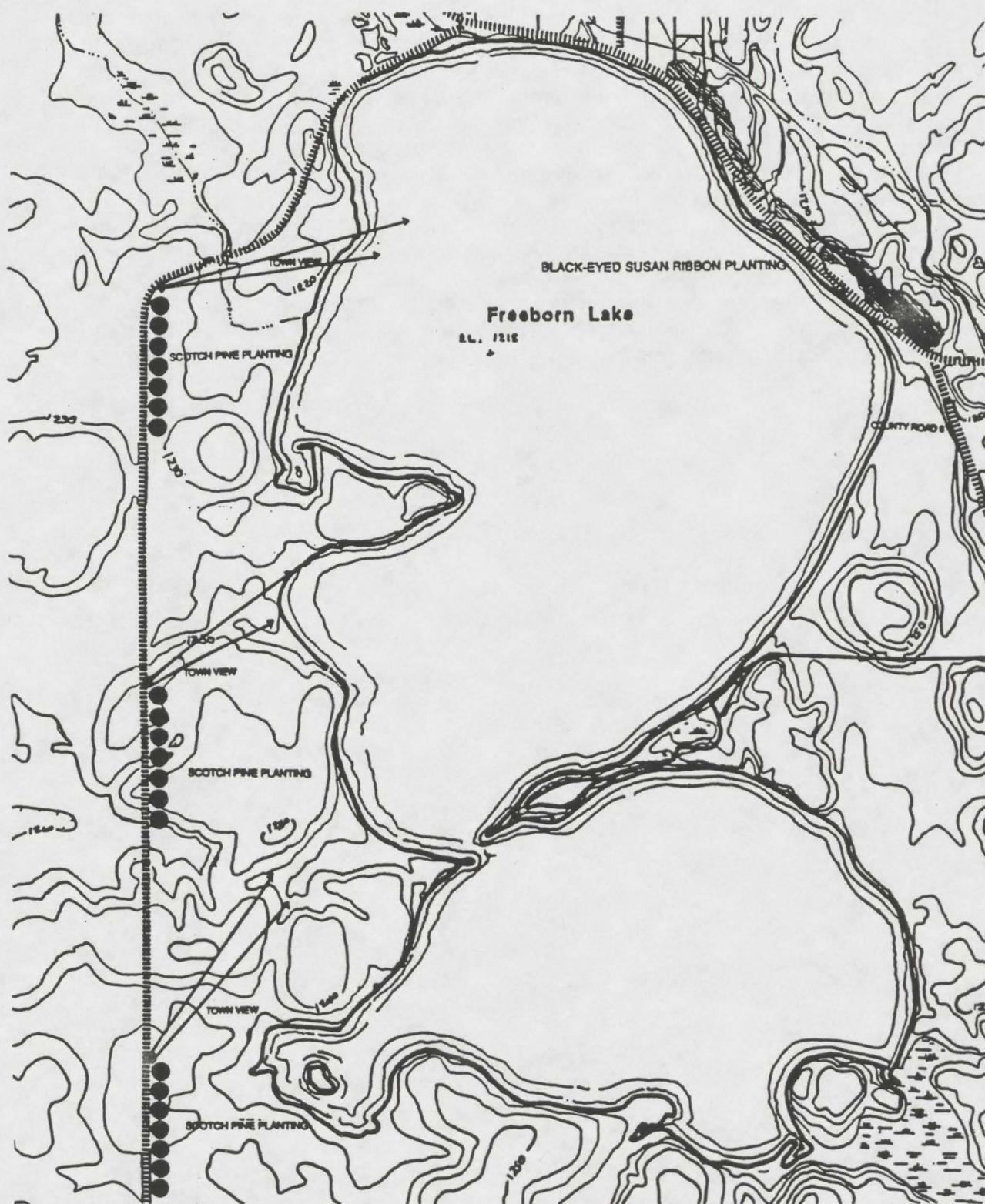


Figure 20. Country Approach Signature Plantings. (not to scale)

People coming to Freeborn from the west perceive the crossroads of County Roads 6 and 29 as the West Entry of town. Here, many people gain their first impression of Freeborn. To enhance this place critical to the image of Freeborn, a huge, cheery planting of Black-Eyed Susan flowers is proposed at the grassy triangle at the intersection. Black-Eyed Susans, like the Scotch Pine trees could become Freeborn's signature "flower". They are bright, attention-getting and adapt easily to roadside planting. Also, another seven-tree Scotch Pine planting is proposed that would face the visitor traveling in from County Road 6 and run alongside those coming in on County Road 29.

As people entering Freeborn from the west, round the curve east of crossroads of Highways 6 and 29, a clear view appears of the water tower straight ahead. Here the Freeborn sign should be relocated on the right towards the lake. Another planting of Black-Eyed Susans is suggested under the sign and continuing on along the lake toward town.

The existing and proposed entry sequence into from the west is shown in Figure 21.

EXISTING



A

- First view of town water tower and elevator across beautiful and productive agricultural land.



EXISTING

- Crossroads of 29 and 6
- First impression of town



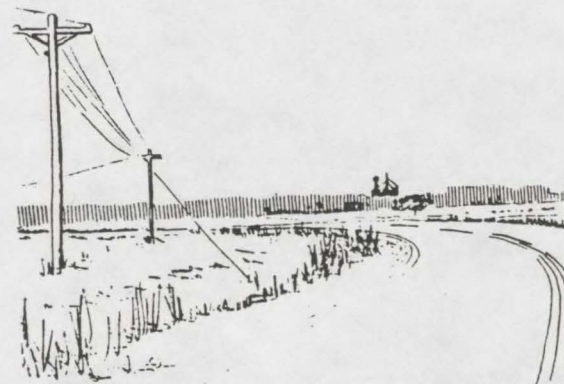
B

- First view of lake
- Closer view of town water tower elevator and some buildings.



PROPOSED

- Plant massive ribbon planting of Black-eyed Susans in intersection triangle
- Repeat Scotch Pine signature planting
- Provides first impression of the natural beauty of Freeborn.
- Provides rich background color in winter
- Echoes the Cemetery Scotch Pine Stand



C

- Alluring sweeping curve provides charming lake-town view.



PROPOSED

- Change location of current Freeborn sign.

Figure 21. West Entry Images. Before and After.

PROPOSAL 2 EAST ENTRY

People entering Freeborn from the east on County Road 29 are drawn along by the wonderful curves that follow the lake and reveal the rich agricultural land and surrounding meadows. Following the free-flowing nature of the curving road, a planting of Black-Eyed Susans is proposed to greet and lead the visitor into town. This time, however, the proposed planting would be a long, flowing ribbon approximately ten feet in width that would begin at the crossroads of County Roads 29 and 8 and would continue to the edge of town.

One critical place along the east entry into Freeborn occurs where the road makes a gracious, sweeping curve revealing a surprise view of the east side of town awaits as this curve is rounded. This is one of those locations where lasting impressions of the community are made. But, currently, a highly visible advertising sign rests on the right side of the knoll in the middle of this curve. Because this curve offers a dramatic welcome into town, the community image would be improved if the advertising sign were replaced with a linear signature planting of Scotch Pine trees and if Freeborn's current east entry sign was moved to this curve near the edge of the road.

These proposed changes to the east entry are illustrated in Figure 22.

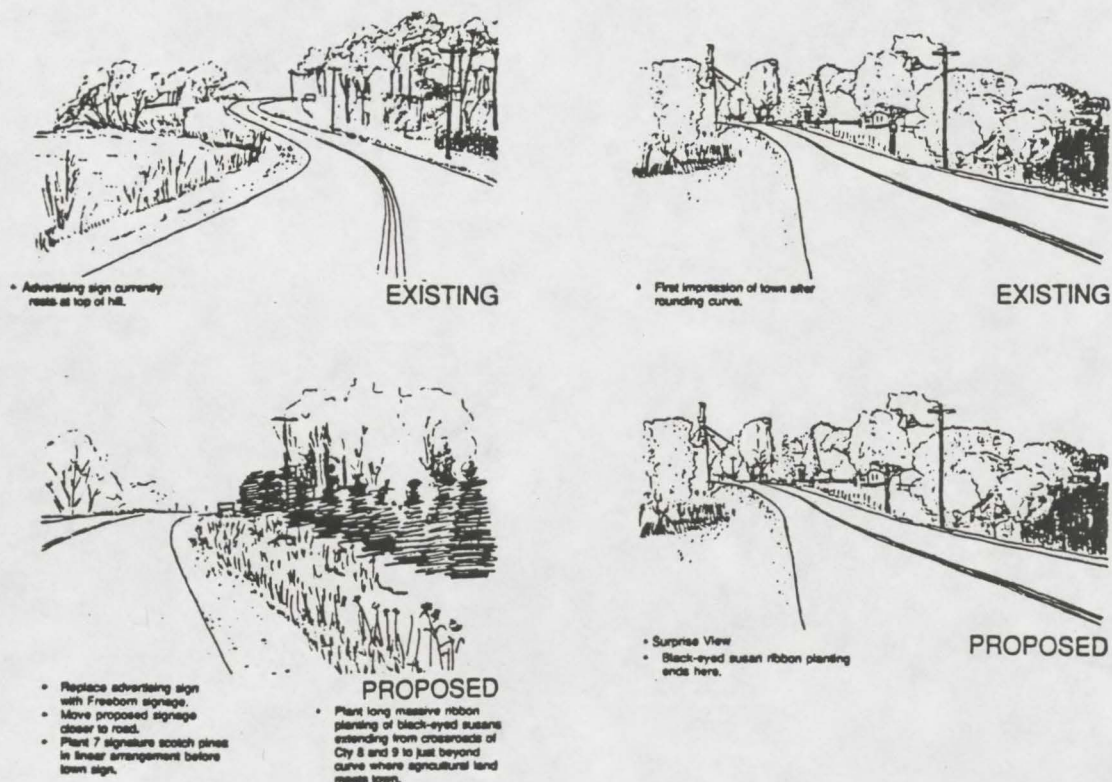


Figure 22. East Town Entry Before and After.

PROPOSAL 3. ARRIVAL AREA

People entering Freeborn feel like they have reached downtown Freeborn when they arrive at the junction of County Road 29 and 5th Avenue. Currently, the Freeborn sign is located there. This sign is below eye-level and competes with other signs for people's attention.

Across the street (at the northeast corner of Highway 29 and 5th Avenue) lies an empty space that could be used as a town commons or town square. This would provide an important, highly visible entry guiding visitors into the heart of Freeborn's business center and would provide a better connection between the town and the lake.

The appearance of the arrival areas near Highway 29 and 5th Avenue are illustrated in Figure 23.



Figure 23. Freeborn Arrival Area. Existing.

Since 1953, the Freeborn community has been proud of its role in starting the first FFA Corn Drive and its continuing commitment to this community service effort.. As a symbol of this heritage, this area could be transformed into "Corn Drive Commons" commemorating Freeborn as a dedicated and generous community. As shown in Figure 24, a monument could be erected in the form of three tall, bronze corn stalks growing from the middle of a circular water fountain. The corn stalks would spray water like rain drops from the tassels. This symbol of corn not only represents the corn of the corn drive, but also represents a community bonded by a common cause and concern. Behind the fountain Scotch Pines would reappear -- this time acting as a backdrop for the main attraction. Brick pavement walks shaped like rays would radiate from the walk surrounding the fountain. One ray would lead as a crosswalk over County Road 29 to a small park--"Harvest Moon Park".

To create a more substantial park, fill could be added to widen the shore area and a retaining wall would be used to help the park jut out into the lake. People could easily stroll onto this overlook and safely lean against a railing as they view beautiful Freeborn Lake. Some of the less desirable trees along the shore could be replaced with native plantings such as Hackberry, Red Maple and Red Oak. This park would provide an area close to town where residents could enjoy summer breezes across the lake, could picnic at the water's edge, and could watch the sun set and the moon rise. Most importantly, Harvest Moon Park and Corn Drive Commons could provide an important link between the business area of town and the community's primary attraction, the lake.

PROPOSAL 4. BUTTERFLY PRAIRIE

The east edge of Freeborn is important to the identity of Freeborn. Here exists an open space that acts like a front porch to town -- a visible transition between the rich agricultural heritage of the countryside and the tranquility of a small midwestern town. This open space -- named here "Butterfly Prairie" -- contributes to the visual quality of Freeborn. But without community concern about the Butterfly Prairie, its use and visual quality could change. The community may consider undertaking measures to protect the Butterfly Prairie area as an open space: the land could become park land or future development could be encouraged to locate elsewhere.

The Butterfly Prairie meadow is surrounded by trees, farm fields, hills and a distant horizon that draws the visitor up the hill where a wide view of the area awaits. The natural bowl-shaped quality of the Butterfly Prairie area is shown in cross-section in Figure 25. and with the surrounding land uses in Figure 26. Looking south from the "view," point indicated on the map, Freeborn Lake is visible in the distance with the meadow and farm fields in the foreground. Looking west, the panoramic view of Freeborn is dominated by large oaks, the grain elevator, and the water tower. To the east and north, the meadow is surrounded by several picturesque farmsteads. Thus each of the essential elements which combine to create the image of Freeborn are visible from this one location.

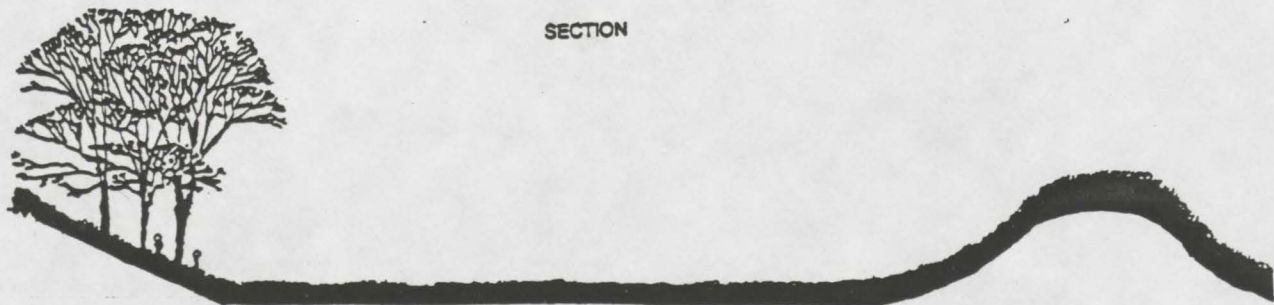


Figure 25. Cross-section of Butterfly Prairie.

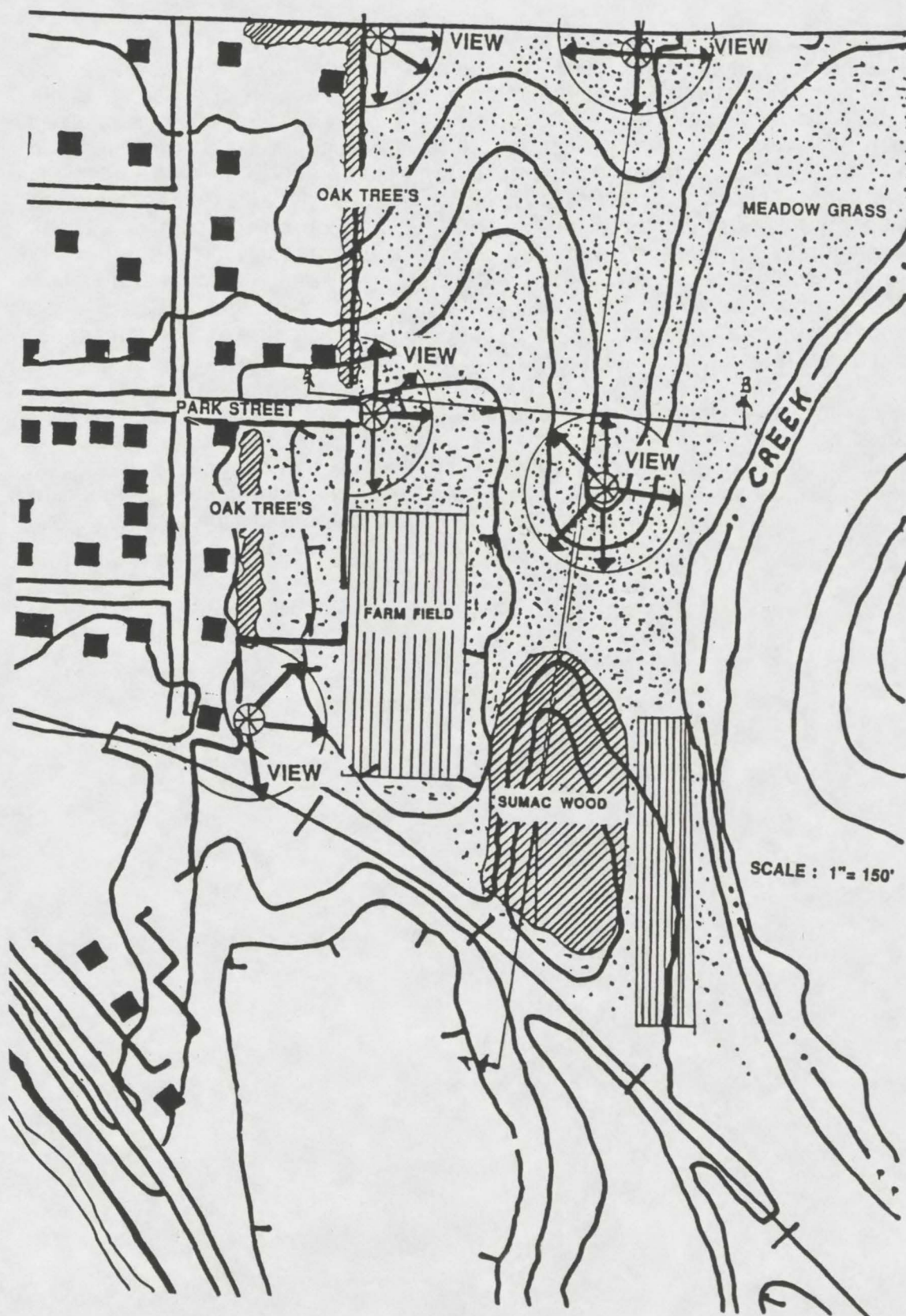


Figure 26. Existing Conditions Map of Butterfly Prairie Area.

This proposal (shown in Figure 27) suggests that the Butterfly Prairie area be enhanced with additional native plantings and with creation of a trail up to the scenic overlook previously described. First, more oak trees could be planted along the west to secure their presence for future generations. Between two new rows of oaks a trail could be looked with the corridor of trees guiding trail users north toward the crest of the hill. The trail would then extend out into the meadow following the the slope of the hill to the highpoint, a scenic overlook where one sees the wide vista. To enhance the meadow area, prairie wild flowers could be planted in long wide bands following the contours of the hillside and resembling the fields in the distance. Also, the natural sumac woods, which is important for contrasting color and texture in the landscape, could be preserved and enhanced.

In the low area between the proposed slopes of prairie flowers and the lake could be attractive fields of specialty crops. Monocultural plantings of crops such as sorghum and sunflowers would provide a wonderful color and textural base for the meadow. This mass of color at town's edge would delight and inspire visitors and inhabitants as an amazing resource under preservation.

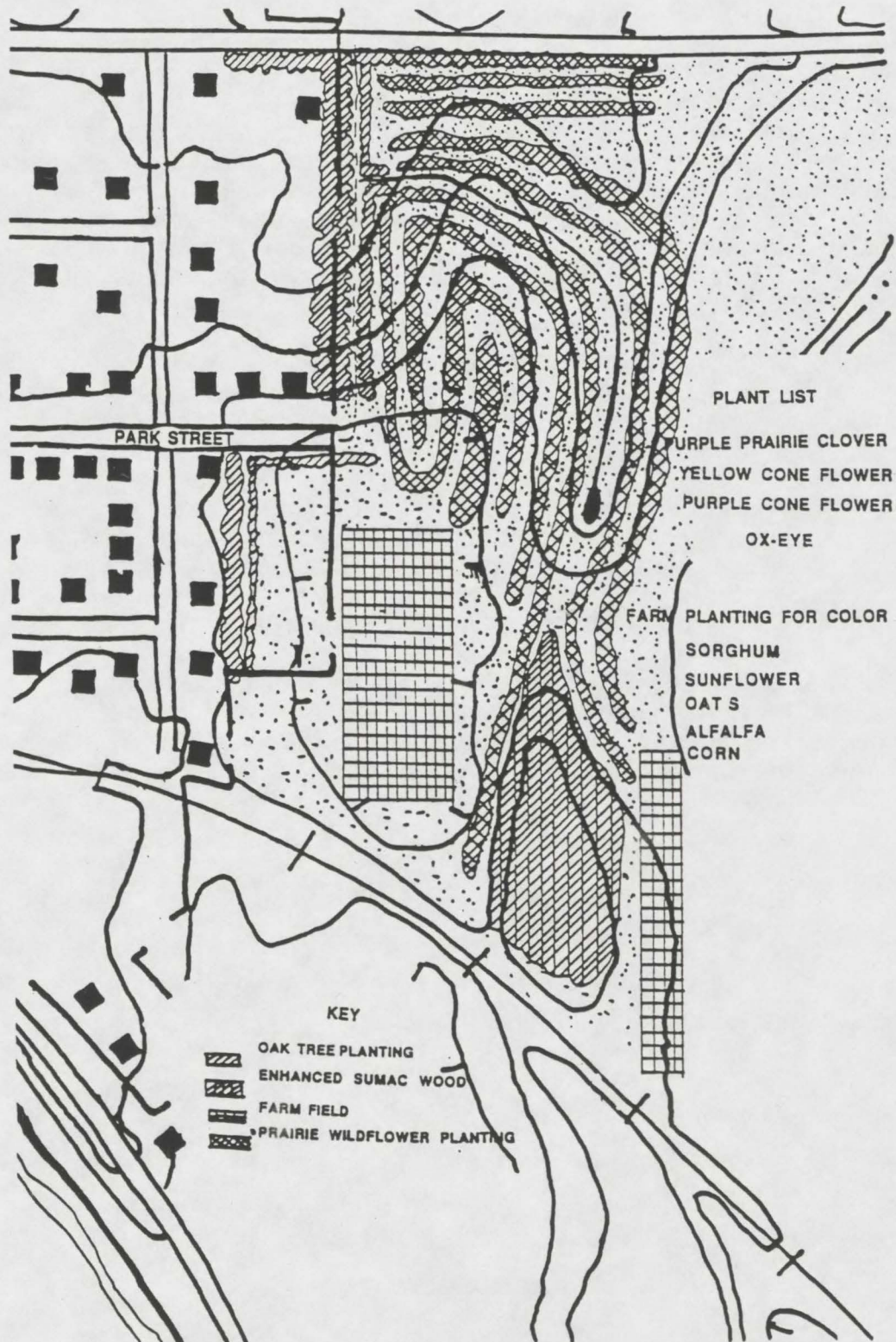


Figure 27. Proposed Plantings & Trail at Butterfly Prairie Area.

PROPOSAL 5. ARROWHEAD TRAIL

Freeborn is blessed with wonderful natural resources in Arrowhead Point County Park. Yet, presently the Park seems even less connected and further away from town that it really is. The current vehicular route to the park does not fully utilize the benefits of the lake. Therefore, an alternative route to or from the park called Arrowhead Trail is proposed. This route would be designed for foot traffic and non-motorized traffic such as bicycles or roller blades and possibly winter cross-country skiing. The trail would feature a marvelous range of natural experiences. The overall alignment proposed for Arrowhead Trail is shown in Figure 29 indicating the location of many of the features illustrated in Figures 28 and 30.

The trail would start at the natural center of the town, Corn Drive Commons and Harvest Moon Park whose lake front area would serve as the trail head for this proposal. From Harvest Moon Park, the trail would move east along the wooded shoreline (see the upper left sketch in Figure 30).

Upon leaving the town of Freeborn, the trail user will have the opportunity to move through the countryside with rolling farmland on one side and the lake on the other. The first rest stop east of town would be Sunset Dock (Figure 28 top). This stop would feature a walk down dock allowing the user to experience the water activities and view the sunsets in the western sky across the lake.

Proceeding up a slight incline to the next delightful view, Oak Point (Figure 28 bottom), the viewer would walk out on a cantilevered deck that exposes an expansive panorama from the town to the park. Here trail users can relax in the shade of the overhanging oak trees while watching activities all along the lake.

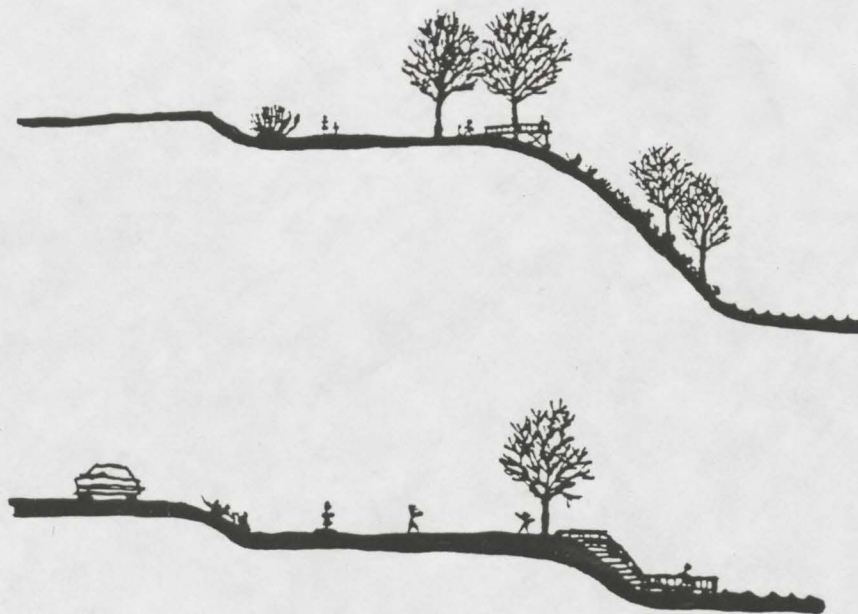


Figure 28. Cross-sections of Sunset Dock & Oak Lookout.

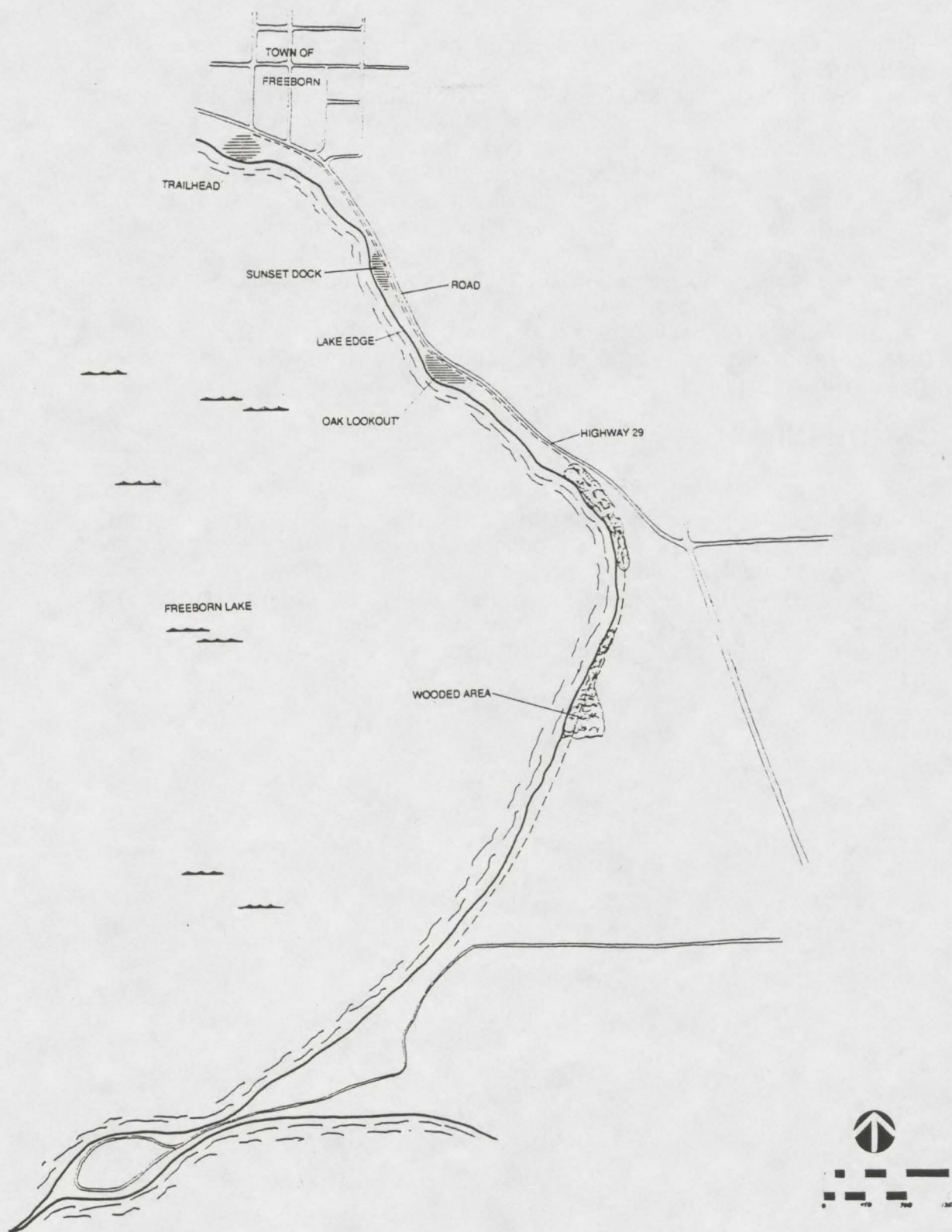


Figure 29. Arrowhead Trail Location Map.

The first half of Arrowhead Trail would hug the top of the slope between County Road 29 and Freeborn Lake. (The upper right sketch in Figure 30 is a view west showing lake, trail, and road.) Motorists glimpsing Arrowhead Trail from the highway would see evidence of the community's pride and effort in providing recreational activities that utilize the lake. About on-half mile from town, a trail marker would signal the trail user to veer away from the highway and continue down along the lake (lower image in Figure 30). Here, at first the trail would seem to end, but soon it would become apparent that the trail continues descending through a natural tunnel of understory vegetation. The canopy of the trees along this part of the shore is very thick and lets in spears of light that would highlight the way. Beyond the woods, the trail user would emerge with golden native grasses on the left and lake breezes on the right. Then, in a short distance would be the gateway of native shade trees that leads into Arrowhead Park.

CONCLUSION

These proposals are meant to inspire the community of Freeborn to think more about the importance of the edges or transition areas between Freeborn and the lake and countryside which surround it. The ideas behind these proposals for entry and arrival area improvements, for linking the heart of town with Arrowhead Park, and for preserving and enhancing the open space along the town's eastern edge, each would contribute significantly to the attractiveness of Freeborn and may play an important role in the growth of the Freeborn community.

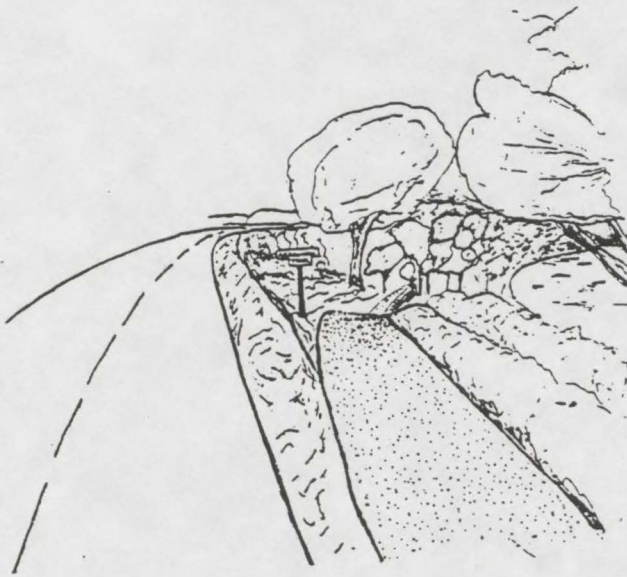
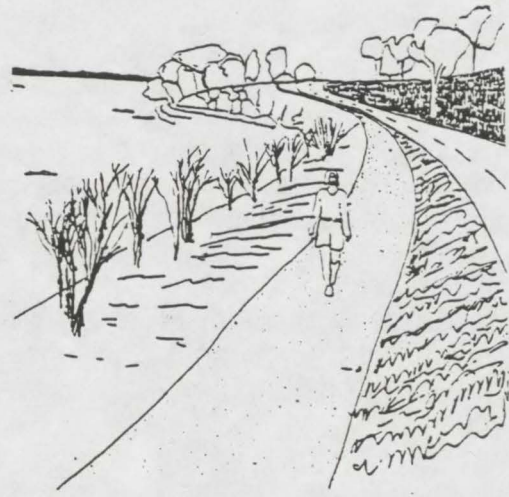


Figure 30. Images along Proposed Arrowhead Trail

PART THREE. THE CITY OF FREEBORN

INTRODUCTION

The well being of any community is reflected in its homes, businesses, public buildings, as well as in the streets and open spaces that interconnect them. These open spaces include the sidewalk and tree-lined boulevard spaces along the streets, the parks and playgrounds, and the many leftover spaces in and around buildings. The focus of this study was to look at these open spaces and how improvements to them could improve the attractiveness of the city of Freeborn as a place to visit and to live.

ANALYSIS

The open spaces of Freeborn were analyzed from several perspectives. The visual and functional significance of the community's open space landmarks were noted: the lake shore, the town park, the school grounds, and the cemetery.

People's destinations as pedestrians were noted as well as limitations and opportunities to easily get from one area to another. For example, sidewalks along streets are prevalent throughout Freeborn but many need repair.

The importance of commerce to Freeborn was also noted. However, missed opportunities were observed: downtown lacks a cohesiveness and not taken advantage of its proximity to the lake or the visual prominence of the grain elevators.

The overall patterns of streets and buildings in Freeborn is suggested in the basemap prepared of the town (Figure 31). More specific observations are discussed with each of the following design proposals.



Figure 31. City of Freeborn Basemap.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

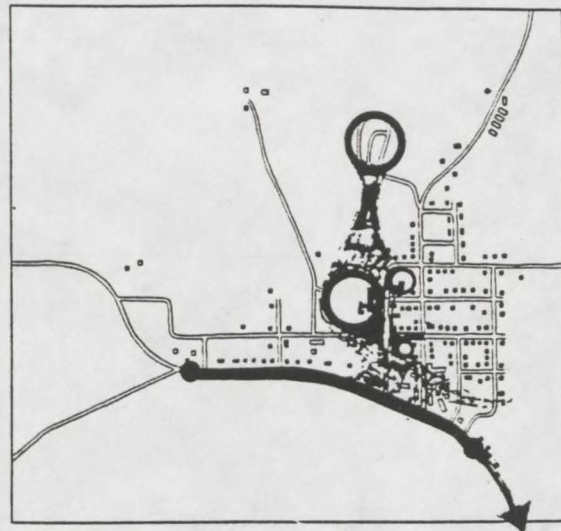
Two distinct approaches were pursued in developing ideas for community open space improvements. Each aimed at emphasizing and unifying significant features of Freeborn.

DESIGN STRATEGY A. PUBLIC GREENWAYS

The first strategy (Figure 32, top) would be to improve Freeborn by emphasizing the town's existing and potential natural open space features and connecting them with a system of planted greenways. Significant existing open spaces, from north to south are the cemetery, town park, school grounds and lakeshore. Open spaces which could be enhanced through plantings include the community entries and neglected spaces near the elevators. By planting and creating trails at and between these areas an obvious and useful community greenway system would be created.

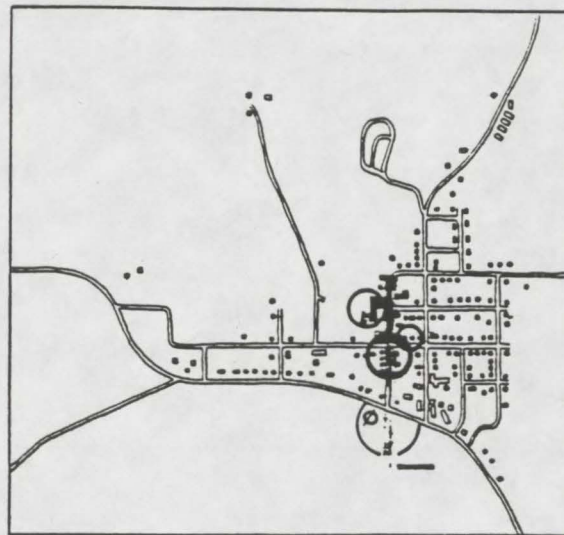
DESIGN STRATEGY B. LAKE THEME AXIS

An alternative strategy (Figure 32, bottom) would be to focus on one of Freeborn's primary commercial streets - 5th Avenue. Both the overall community image as well as that of the business district could be strengthened by improvements along 5th. The street's role of connecting the town and the lake could be emphasized along with store front improvements.



PUBLIC GREENWAYS

- ENTRY/EXIT
- GREEN CONNECTION TO PARK
- PUBLIC GREENSPACE
- LAKESHORE BOULEVARD
- ELEVATOR HARVEST PLANTINGS
- GREENWAYS
- PRAIRIE RESTORATION



LAKE THEME AXIS

- UNIFIED STREET FRONTS
- MAIN AXIS TO LAKE
- SECONDARY AXIS
- TOWN EXTENSION AS PART OF LAKE
- BOAT RENTAL
- BANDSHELL

Figure 32. Design Strategies for Town Open Space Improvements.

DESIGN PROPOSALS

From the overall design strategies, come four more specific proposals : the 5th Avenue beautification project, town park improvements, a grain elevator project, and a trail proposal.

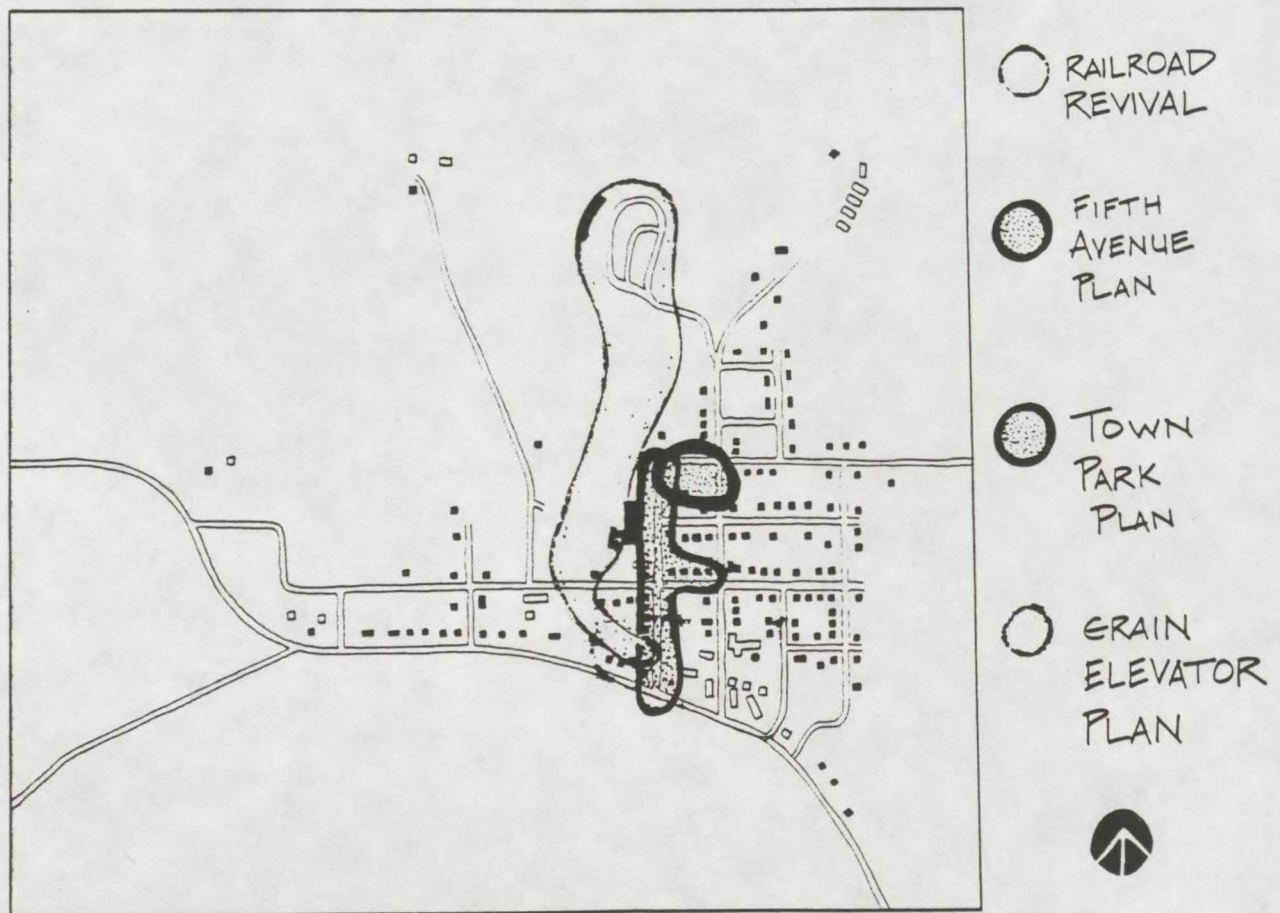


Figure 33. Locations of Town Open Space Improvement Proposals.

PROPOSAL 1. FIFTH AVENUE BEAUTIFICATION

The community's desire to attract people and business, suggests that a focus for community improvements may be to increase the quality of 5th Avenue as the heart of Freeborn's business and civic activities. This could be achieved by visually unifying the street and by more clearly using 5th as the community's link to the lake. The significance of 5th Avenue as the connector between the school, the church, downtown, and the lake is suggested in Figure 34.

Fifth Avenue emphasizes Freeborn's special relationship with the lake. This is due to the fact that 5th Avenue terminates at the lake just a block from the heart of downtown. Thus, the lake is the focal point of the community which can be seen from any position along the street. To enhance this relationship, improvements can be made which perceptually bring the lake into downtown by creating a visual channel to Freeborn Lake.

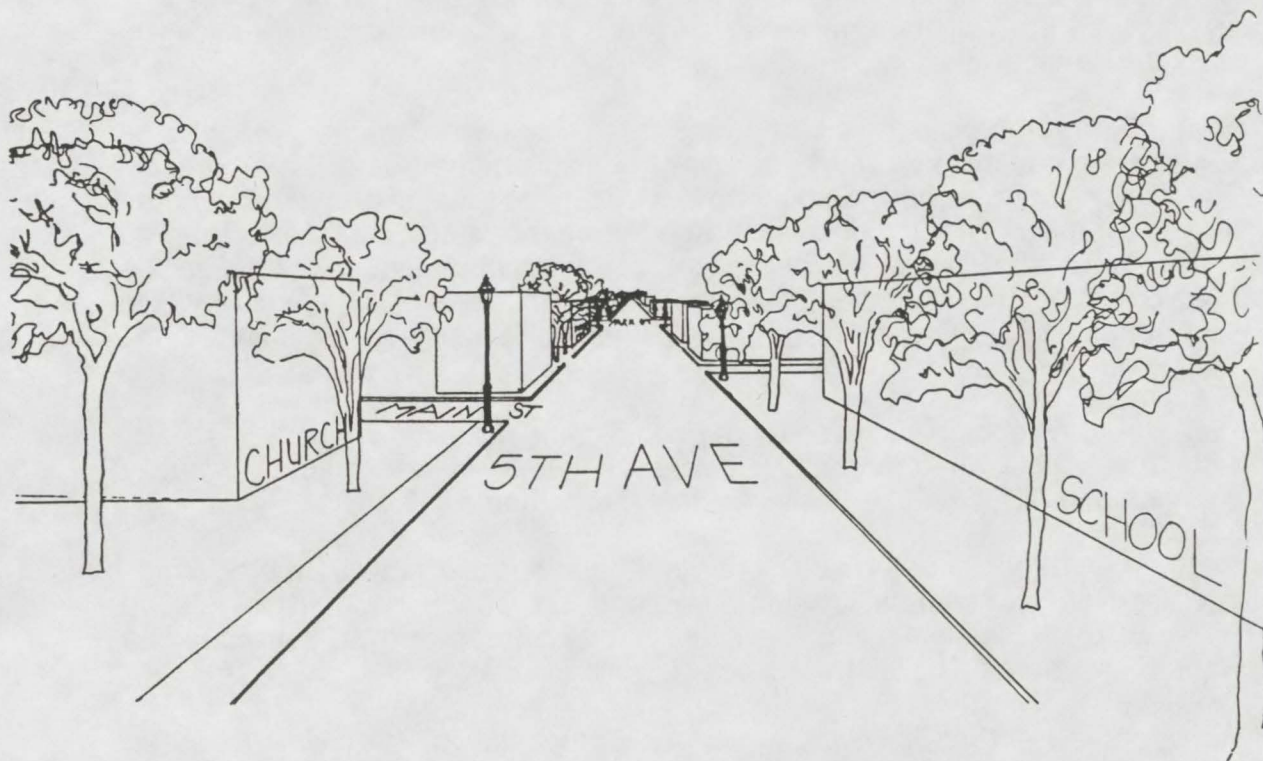


Figure 34. 5th Avenue. The Commercial & Civic Heart of Freeborn.

Numerous openings now exist along 5th Avenue which draw the eye off to the side towards vacant areas. These views distract from the businesses along the street and the more important view towards the lake. Also, without a more intimate sense of enclosure, the community loses its personal, comfortable, and friendly feeling. This proposal suggests that a stronger edge along both sides of the street be created to direct views along the building facades and to the lake at the end of the street. This could be achieved by encouraging uniform storefront dimensions and by using fences and hedges along the sidewalk property line. Street trees could be planted on the boulevard in those areas where there are no store fronts (next to vacant spaces and where stores are set back from the sidewalk). Also, lower pedestrian scale street lamps along the sidewalks could be added to reinforce this edge and to delineate 5th Avenue as different from other city streets. With these improvements, the street would appear to be a more linear visual corridor emphasizing the view down the store fronts to the lake.

Specific examples of how these ideas could be applied going south down the street are discussed here. Just south of the church is a vacated business along side an empty lot. By screening the lot from the street with trees and a low hedge, the edge of the main street is emphasized. Also, street lamps and awnings on the building that would be typical of only 5th Avenue would help unify the street and business district.

Figure 35 (top) depicts the existing view along side Deb's Market, looking south towards the center of downtown and the intersection of 5th and Park Avenues. The sketch suggests how the building facades lead to the lake at the end of the street, but the view of the lake is blocked by some trees on the lakeshore. The lower sketch shows additional street trees, street lamps, and awnings, so the eye floats smoothly along the unified buildings to the lake. Also, the view would be strengthened by opening up the lakeshore by selectively removing some trees.

Park Street (Freeborn's secondary business street including city hall) intersects with 5th Avenue in front of Deb's Market. Park Street could be visually connected to 5th Avenue with similar street lamps and awnings.

South of Park on 5th Avenue, where other open spaces between the buildings distract from commercial corridor low fences or hedges could be placed between the buildings along the sidewalk. Also, trees and shrubs could be planted between the buildings to block views to the distance.

Finally, at the end of 5th Avenue near the Cenex station, the building edge of 5th Avenue could be suggested by planting the same street trees. This corner of 5th Avenue and Lake Shore Drive could also be an ideal place for the community Christmas tree that would, when decorated, unite this edge with the decorated businesses near the center of town.



Figure 35. 5th Avenue Beautification. Before and After.

PROPOSAL 2. TOWN PARK

Nestled in the heart of Freeborn is a park that any community would love to have for its own. Freeborn Town Park is only a half block in size, but it is next to the public school and the church and is centrally located among the town's residences.

The most wonderful characteristic of Town Park is the dense, beautiful grove of tall, healthy oak trees. Freeborn's pride in the unique character and beauty Town Park can be translated into commitment to continue to improve the facilities of the Park. The following proposal demonstrates improvements that can help lead Freeborn in that direction. The existing condition of Town Park and how all the activities described below could be integrated with the existing trees of Town Park are mapped in Figure 36 and illustrated in Figure 38.

One important function of the park is to provide a safe and fun place for children to play. Changes in the park could improve opportunities for play while making the park safer and easier for parents to supervise small children. Teeter-totters and tall free-standing slides, such as those presently in the park, are known to cause injuries to children and should be replaced with safer equipment. The merry-go-round, jungle gym and shorter slide could be clustered together so the childrens' activities could take place in one specific part of the park. Clustering play equipment encourages children to participate in "continuous play" using all the play equipment one after another. Also it enables supervisors to be in one place and more easily watch a group of children.

Very small children have different needs for play than the older ones. Toddlers would enjoy a sandbox, diggers, and low climbing structures. These could be placed centrally in the park, away from automotive traffic on the streets. A childrens' tricycle path could circulate and connect the activity areas of the park. The track would be separated from the roads by low hedges and picnic tables, and would be a safe place for small children to ride their trikes and big wheels. These barriers could help parents to keep their children from running or riding out into the street, and the picnic tables could give parents a comfortable place from which to see their children play.

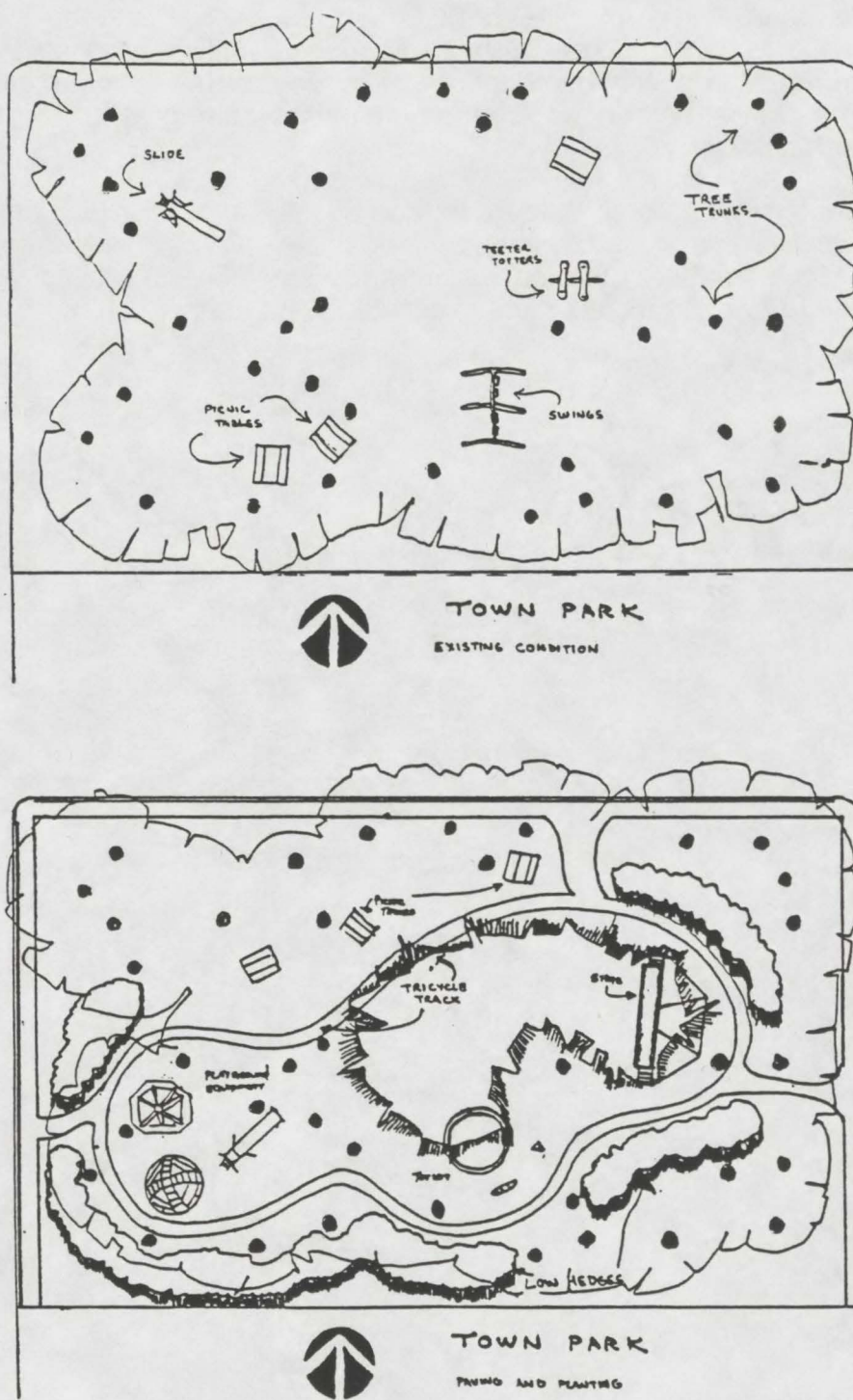


Figure 36. Freeborn Town Park Plan. Before and After.

To make the park more useful to the community, an outdoor stage or a simple platform could be fitted into the park. Here could be outdoor musical performances, plays, and speeches. Imagine bringing a lawn chair on a warm July night to hear the church choir concert or in May for the school glee club. Setting up a movie screen on Saturday nights would give teenagers a wholesome group activity.

Some residents feel the park is too dark and spooky at night. Placement of pedestrian scale lights along the interior back side of the park would improve safety and would reduce the chances of vandalism. The improved lighting would provide for a pleasant late-night stroll through the park.



Figure 37. Outdoor Stage Proposed for Town Park

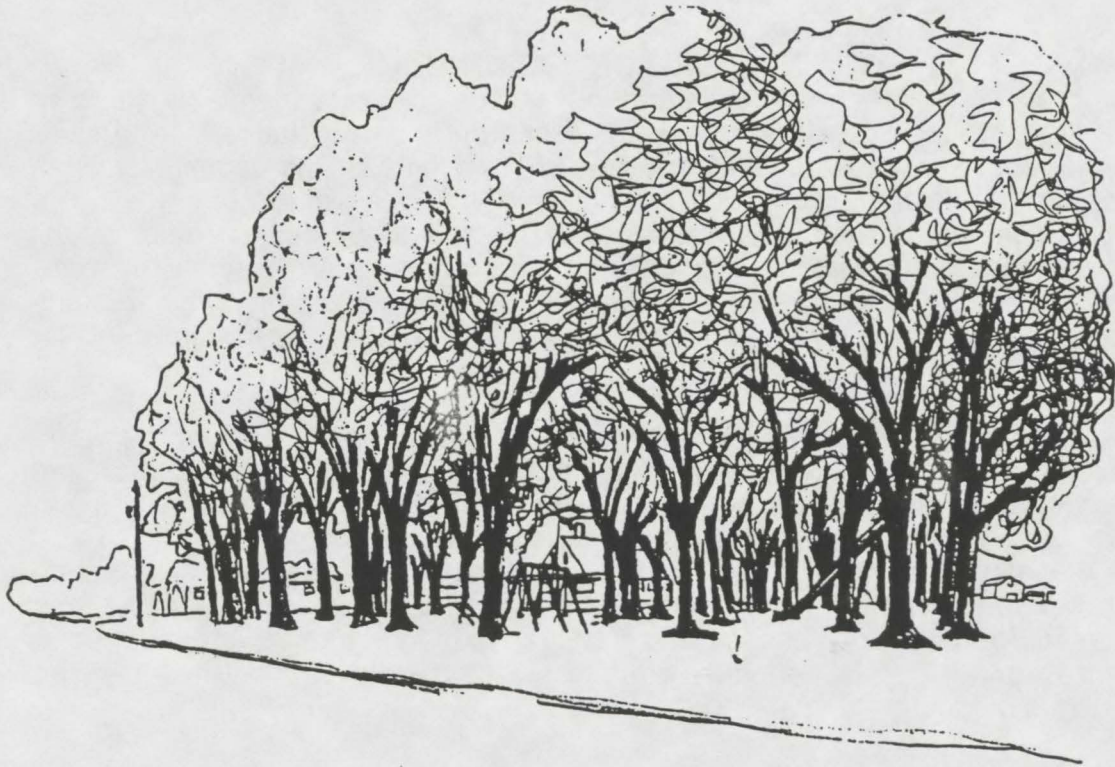


Figure 38. View Towards Town Park. Before and After.

PROPOSAL 3. GRAIN ELEVATOR LANDMARK

The grain elevator is an essential part of Freeborn. Its prominence as the town landmark can be seen looking towards Freeborn from a distance. A structure built out of necessity, the elevator also acts as a 'hub' for the community. It is between downtown, residential, agricultural and lakeside districts of town. It is a social, cultural landmark. The business transacted at the elevator has a social dimension as the weather, economy, and day's events are discussed at the elevator and over coffee at the cafe. Freeborn is a community of many backgrounds who come together culturally with their common bond in agriculture.

The elevator is symbolically and physically situated at the junction between grain and water, being between agricultural land and Freeborn Lake, and between grain storage and the water tower. When water is added to grain, it sprouts. Sprouting or germination symbolizes potential for new growth. Thus, the elevator could be used as a visible focal point for the community: creating interest and establishing identity, while symbolizing community pride and potential for growth. These ideas are diagrammed in Figure 39 and mapped in Figure 40. The existing visual prominence of the elevator is shown in the sketches of Figure 41.

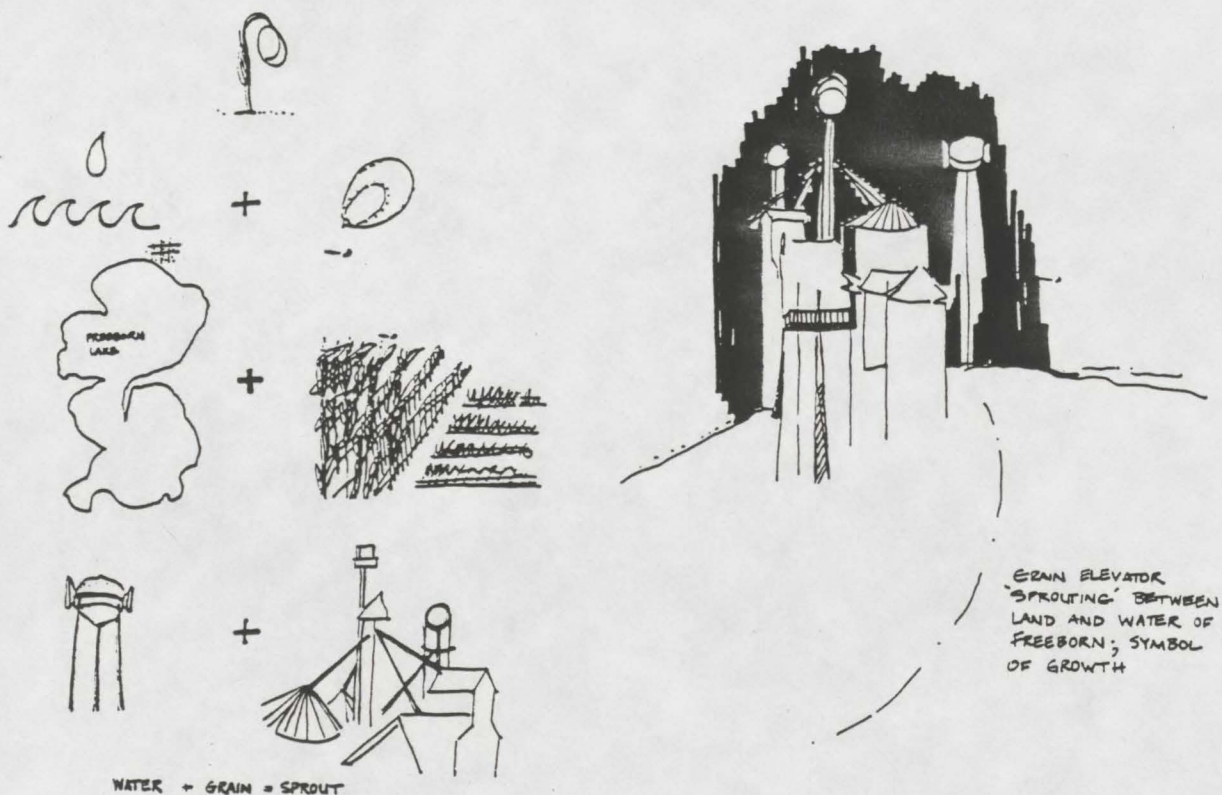


Figure 39. The Grain Elevator as Community Symbol & Landmark.

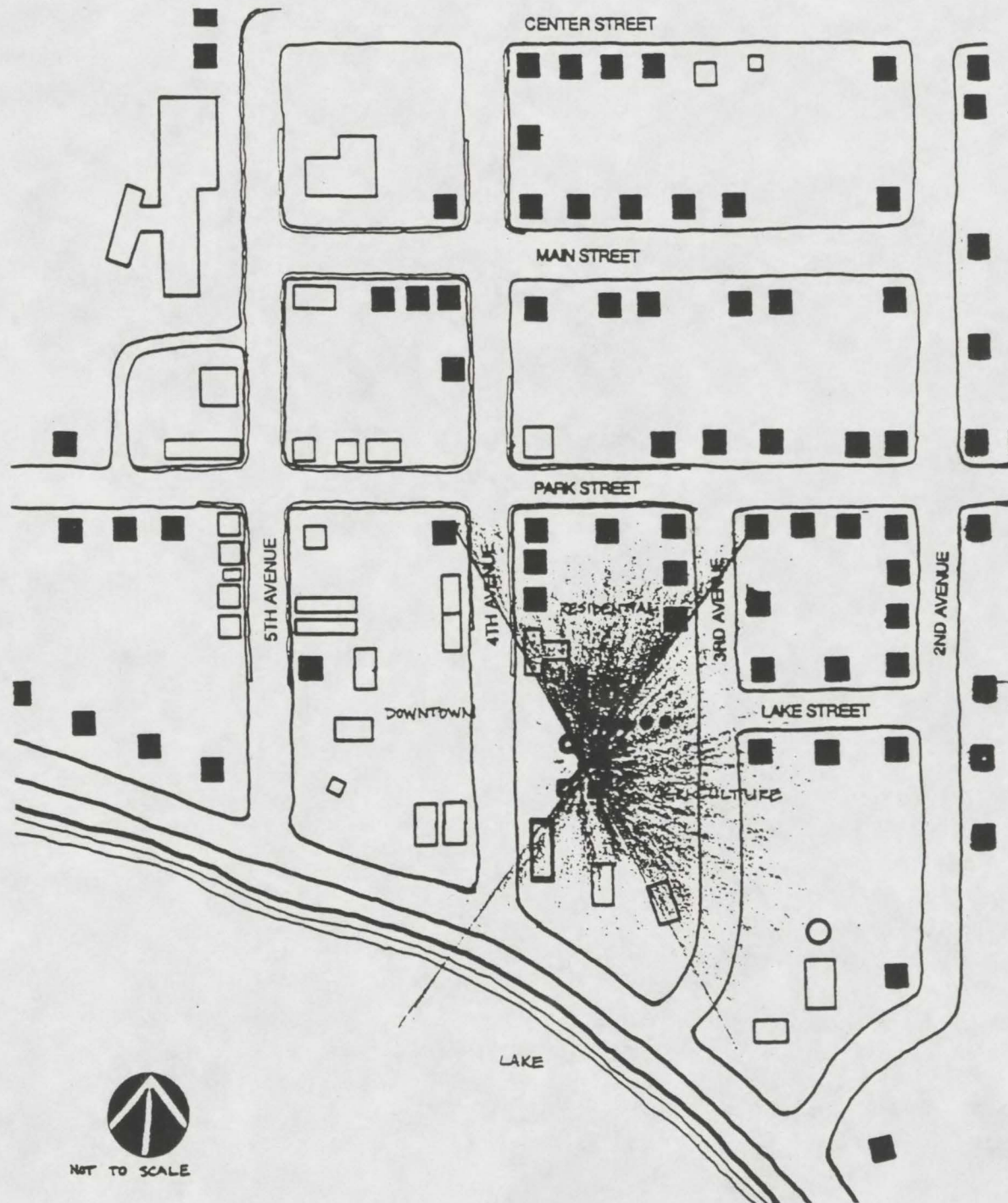


Figure 40. The Grain Elevator as the Hub of the Community.



Figure 41. Views of the Grain Elevator. From Highway 29.

A way to use these ideas would be to make the grain elevator act as a welcoming invitation to Freeborn. In addition to its agricultural functions, the elevator site could become the location of a community overlook. The overlook could be constructed from rural structures like silos. People could go up into the structure and have a magnificent view of Freeborn Lake, the city and, its surroundings. Below the overlook (in areas not critical to the elevator's operation), demonstration plots of agricultural crops could be planted. A planting plan suggesting agricultural growth could be used to demonstrate the experience of what it is like to be a part of a corn field and to walk through the corn rows. Seed dealers could have the opportunity to show area farmers the latest hybrids. Perhaps samples of older heritage varieties of crops would also be shown..

This agricultural "garden" would form a picturesque front for the three blocks along Lakeshore Drive from 2nd to 5th Avenues. This would incorporate a common green area for community picnics or seasonal events. The planted area could continue along the route of the old railroad bed. The path leading to a garden space could become progressively more cultivated as it reaches the heart of downtown representing the pride of the community in seasonal blooms.

Figure 42 suggests the relationship (from left to right) of the Freeborn's residential area, water tower, elevator area, proposed overlook, proposed agricultural demonstration plantings, and Freeborn Lake.

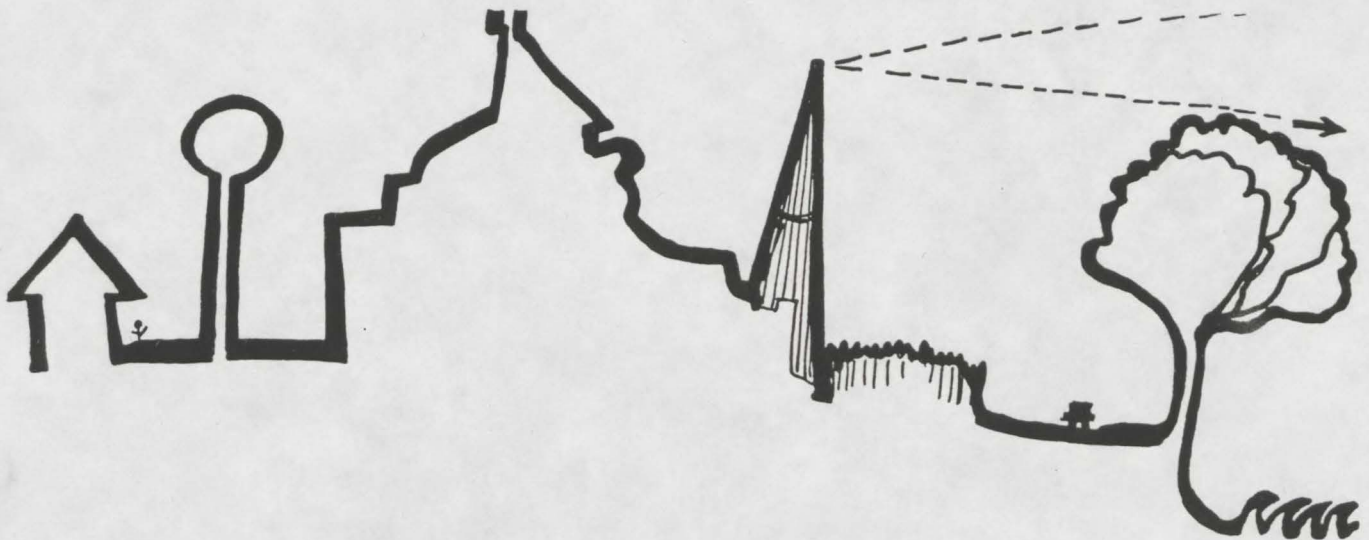


Figure 42 Diagrammatic Cross-section Overlook & Surroundings.

PROPOSAL 4. RAILWAY REVIVAL WALK

Currently no walking trails exist in town and there is a feeling of going through the back door to, reach the cemetery and school athletic fields. To help solve these problems, a trail could be created through Freeborn connecting many of the community's most significant places. This proposed trail could begin at the main commercial street of 5th Avenue (with its easy link to Freeborn Lake and the proposed Arrowhead Trail). Then it would follow the old railroad alignment (thus the name Railway Revival Walk) to the school athletic fields. And finally through an agricultural area it would reach the beautiful cemetery. This trail could be used for recreational purposes throughout the year and it would give Freeborn a ceremonial route for parades. The overall alignment of the proposed trail is mapped in Figure 44 and beginning below each of the six segments of the proposed trail will be discussed and illustrated.

Entrance

The proposed trail begins at the west side of 5th Avenue where the railroad tracks formerly existed. As shown in Figure 43, light posts, like those suggested as part of 5th Avenue beautification project, the would greet the visitor at the trail entrance. A ramp would bring the visitor down into the prairie railroad walk.

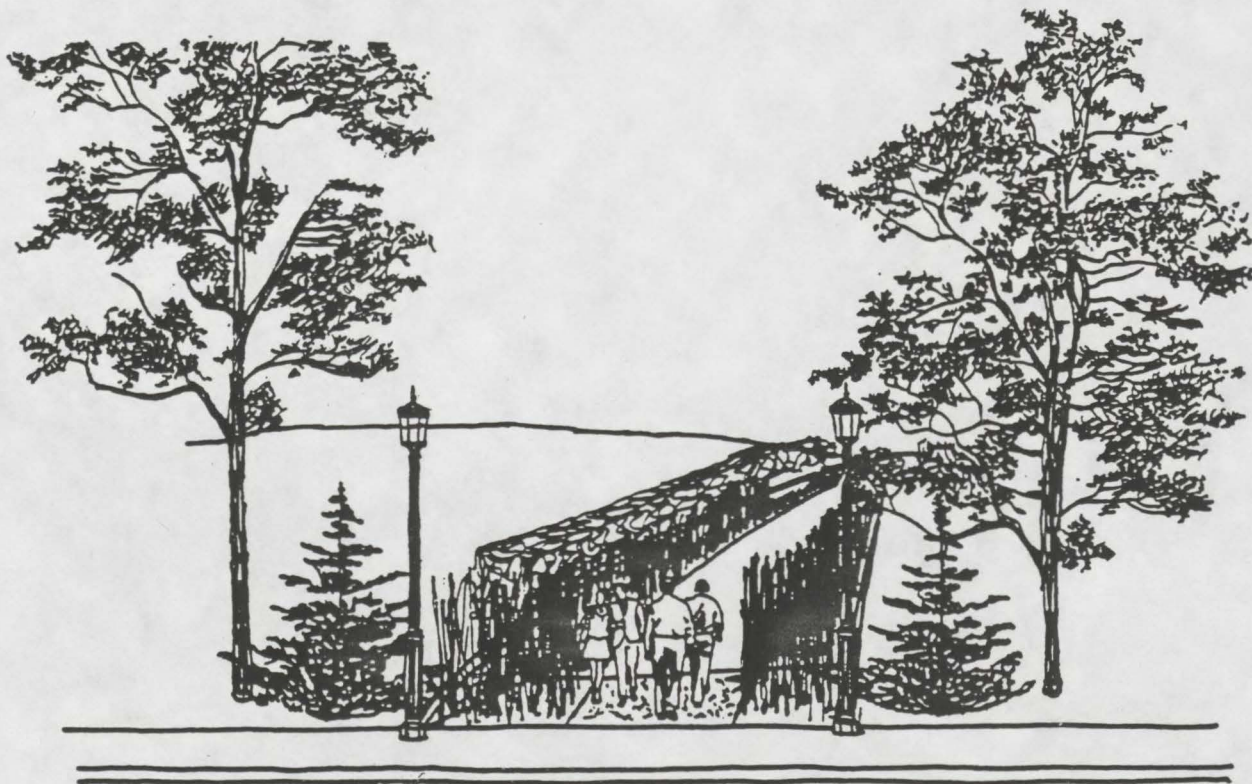


Figure 43. Entrance to Railroad Revival Walk from 5th Avenue.

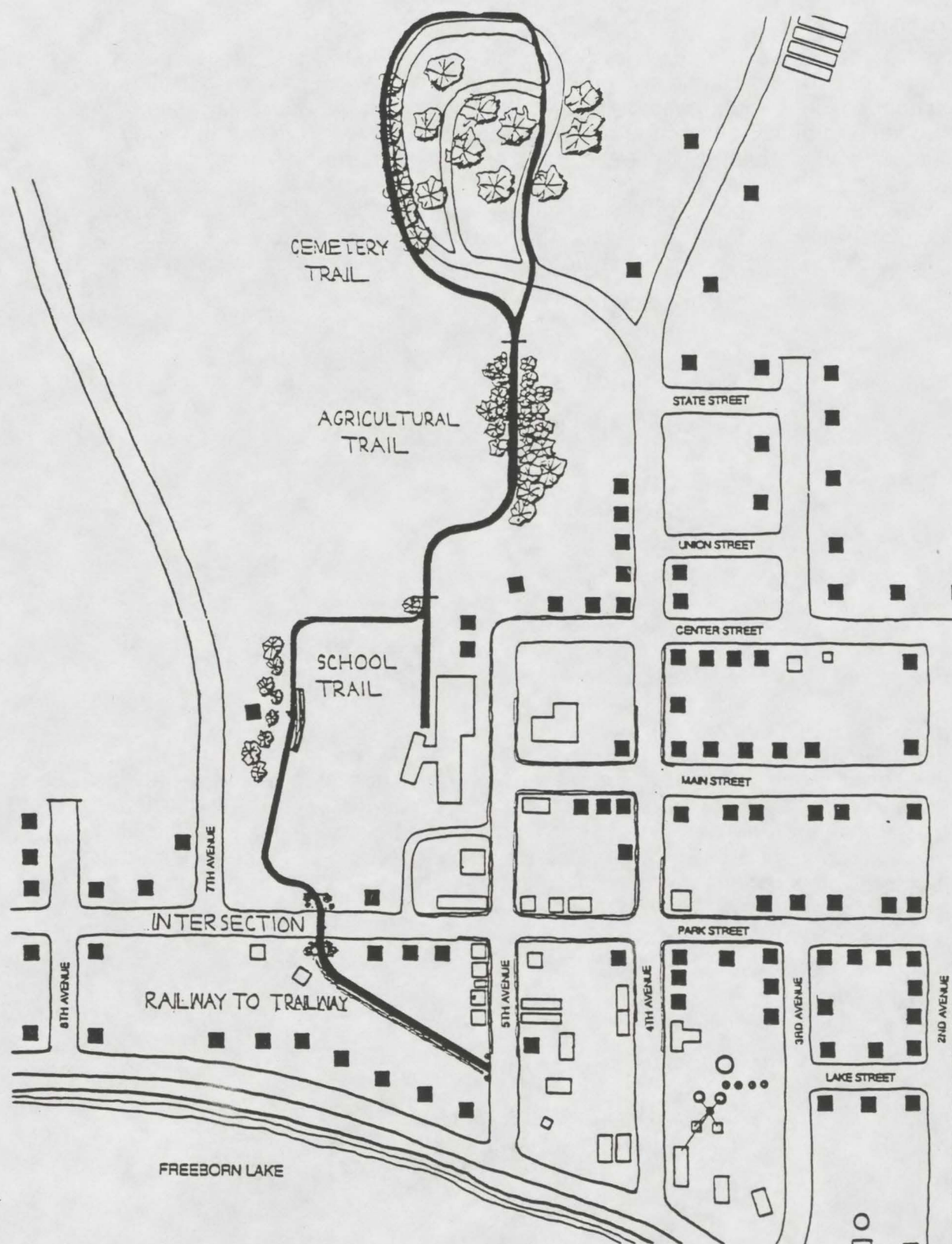


Figure 44. Railway Revival Walk Plan.

Railway to Trailway

The proposed walkway extending from 5th Avenue up to Park Street would be edged with prairie plantings that would bloom spring, summer and fall. Grade school children could become involved in this program by collecting seeds in the fall and planting them the following spring. Rails would define the edge of the path with railroad tie walls used to separate the trail from adjoining backyards. Trailway lighting and benches would line the route. Backyards would remain private with hedges planted on the south side blocking views from the trail into the yards. Figure 45 shows a typical plan and cross-section of the adjoining yard, hedge, retaining wall, prairie flower plots, trail and sitting area.

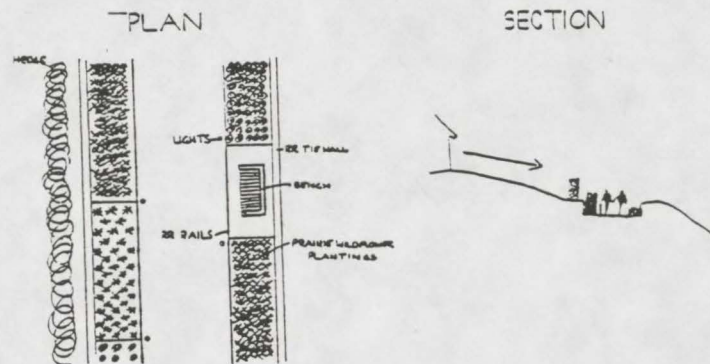


Figure 45. Typical Design for Railway to Trailway Area.

Park Street Intersection

The trail crossing Park Street would be marked with railroad ties embedded in the street. The change in surface and use of a crossing sign (like an old railroad crossing sign) would clearly warn motorists to watch for pedestrians crossing on the trail. Additional street lights would be repeated before and after the intersection, for safety. Plantings would change from one side to the other representing a change in the path. Figure 46 shows how the trail would cross perpendicular to Park Street.

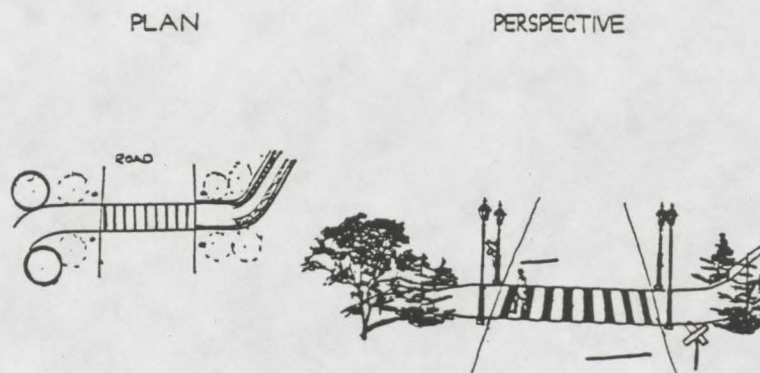


Figure 46. Proposed Trail Crossing of Park Street.

School Trail

The next segment of the trail provides access to the school athletic fields. As illustrated in Figure 47, seating on grass above the trail and cement seating below would provide a view of football and baseball as an alternative to bleachers on the other side. Again, lights will brighten the path. Access to the school will be on the East side.

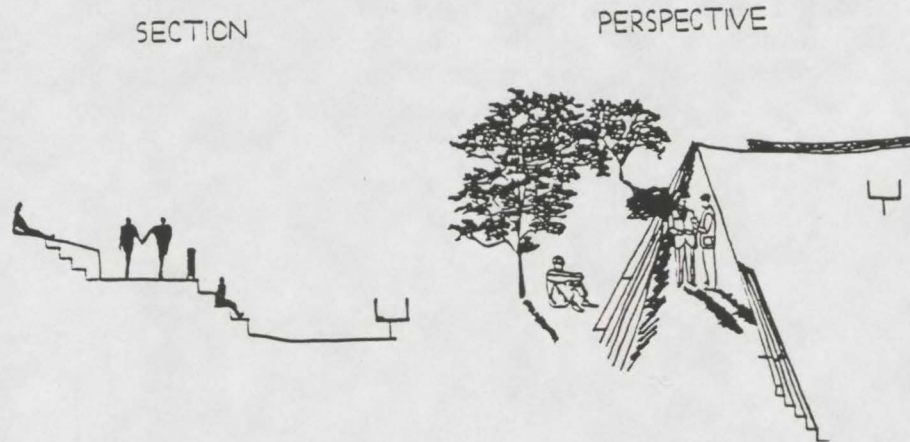


Figure 47. Proposed School Trail Along Football Field.

Agricultural Trail

As the trail goes north of the school grounds, it passes through a small valley used for agriculture. The trail would skirt along the edge of the cultivated fields with a fence and/or prairie plantings providing a buffer between crops and the trail as shown in Figure 48. The path would weave in and out of the woods and up and down the gentle slope. Views of crop land and prairie vegetation would be accentuated. Lights would continue along the path to encourage evening strolls.

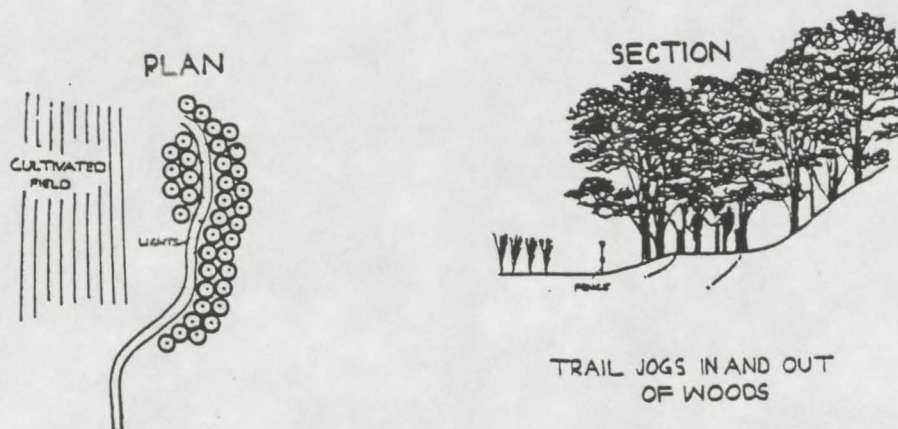


Figure 48. Proposed Trail at Edge of Agricultural Fields.

Cemetery Trail

Freeborn's cemetery sits upon a lovely oak covered knoll with magnificent Scotch Pines sheltering it on the west and other mature evergreens along the north. The cemetery is such a special place, that bringing a community trail to it seems appropriate. The trail would veer left under the huge Scotch Pines whose size and beauty would be accentuated with a long walk underneath them. Then the trail would turn east around the back of the cemetery and then south under the oak canopy to the top of the knoll. On top of this knoll, the visitors would be rewarded with a view back across their entire journey. The visitor could see agriculture, the school athletic fields, the residential area, the lake and the prairie on the horizon. Here visitors could contemplate journeys through life, while viewing across the landscape that makes Freeborn so special.

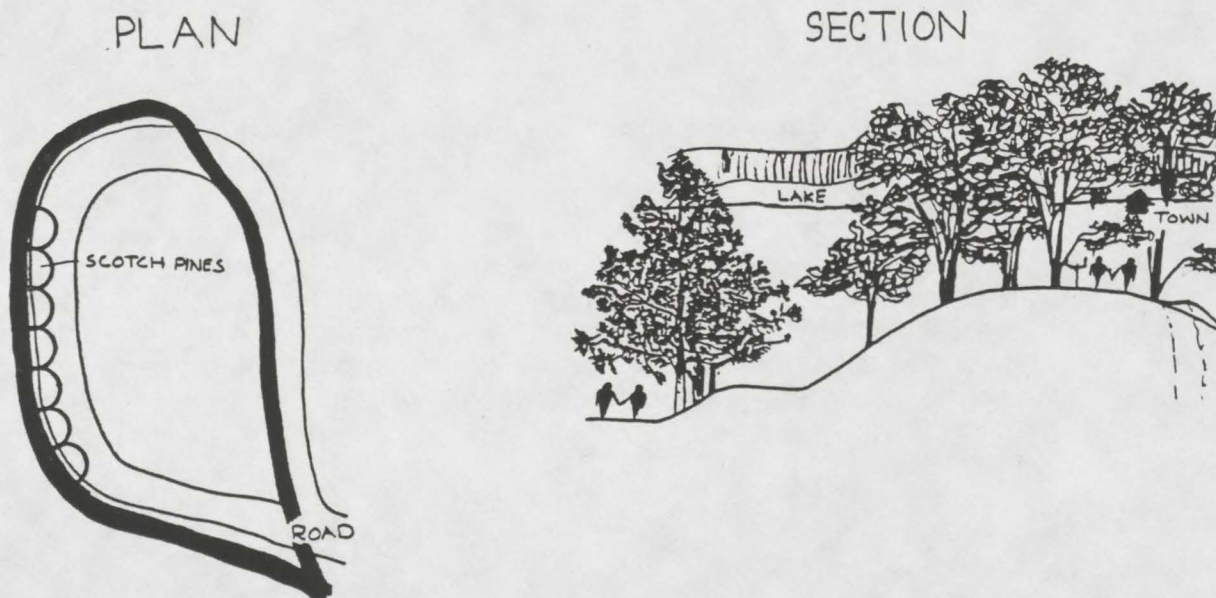


Figure 49. Proposed Cemetery Trail.

CONCLUSION

This brief investigation has demonstrated that Freeborn has many opportunities to enhance the beauty and function of the town's open spaces as part of a community improvement effort. The image of the main street of 5th Avenue could be improved by unifying the different sections with street lamps, awnings, and plantings which would direct views toward the lake. The town's unique relationship with Freeborn Lake would be enhanced, making Freeborn a one-of-a-kind place, drawing visitors, new businesses, and new members of the community.

Likewise, the grain elevator area could continue its essential agricultural functions. while doing more to attract visitors and show people the beauty and utility of both agricultural crops and the city of Freeborn.

Town Park with its beautiful oak grove could become a more attractive, useful, and safer place for visitors and the people of Freeborn. The changes suggested in the play equipment and lighting, and the addition of a stage would not harm the wonderful qualities of this park, but rather would provide more opportunities for the city.

Finally, creation of the Railroad Revival Trail would provide a sense of history along with a connection of the activity centers. From the lake and the commercial center of Freeborn, this walk would bring the whole essence of Freeborn together into a one hour walk.

PART FOUR. ARROWHEAD POINT COUNTY PARK

INTRODUCTION

This last section of the report moves back out from the city of Freeborn to a outstanding feature just 2 miles away on the shores of Freeborn Lake: Arrowhead Point County Park. This park is an undeniable asset to Freeborn and the entire county. While the Park presently contributes greatly to the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities of Freeborn County, this study aims to discover additional ways to use this resource.

ANALYSIS

The essential qualities of Arrowhead Point County Park have been identified here: vegetation, wildlife, microclimate, topography, history, and visual and spatial qualities. The basic form of the park may be described as a narrow peninsula which juts out from the east shore of Freeborn Lake. From the forested mainland part of the peninsula the land dips down to a narrow ridge before ascending again to a high mound which may have been an island. From this ridge the land descends again along a very narrow spit of land which nearly reaches across Freeborn Lake.

The park's vegetation may be classified into four distinct communities based upon the geography of the land they inhabit: north-facing slope, south-facing slope, ridge and peninsula communities. These are mapped in Figure 50 (top). Dominant species include sugar maple, basswood and hackberry trees. A diversity of wildlife also lives within the park.

The lake and the town dominate the view on the north side of the park. Movement through the park brings the visitor through a variety of spaces, corridors and microclimates created by topography and vegetation patterns.

Habitation of the peninsula dates back 6000 years. Figure 50 (bottom) shows the prehistoric settlement area and the supporting archaeological survey results.

The park's physical qualities of various enclosures and views, varying microclimates, and dramatic slopes are also indicated in Figure 50 (bottom).

VEGETATION IN EACH COMMUNITY

NORTH FACING	SOUTH FACING	ROADS	PENINSULA	W. NORTH FACING VEGETATION
GREEN AND WILLOW YOUNG MAPLE SLIP FRUIT AND	FRUIT AND SLIP AND WILLOW	WILLOW MAPLE SLIP AND WILLOW WILLOW FRUIT AND FRUIT AND FRUIT AND	WILLOW SLIP WILLOW MAPLE FRUIT AND	

WILDLIFE IN THE PARK

- WILLOW
- FRUIT AND
- SLIP
- WILLOW
- FRUIT AND

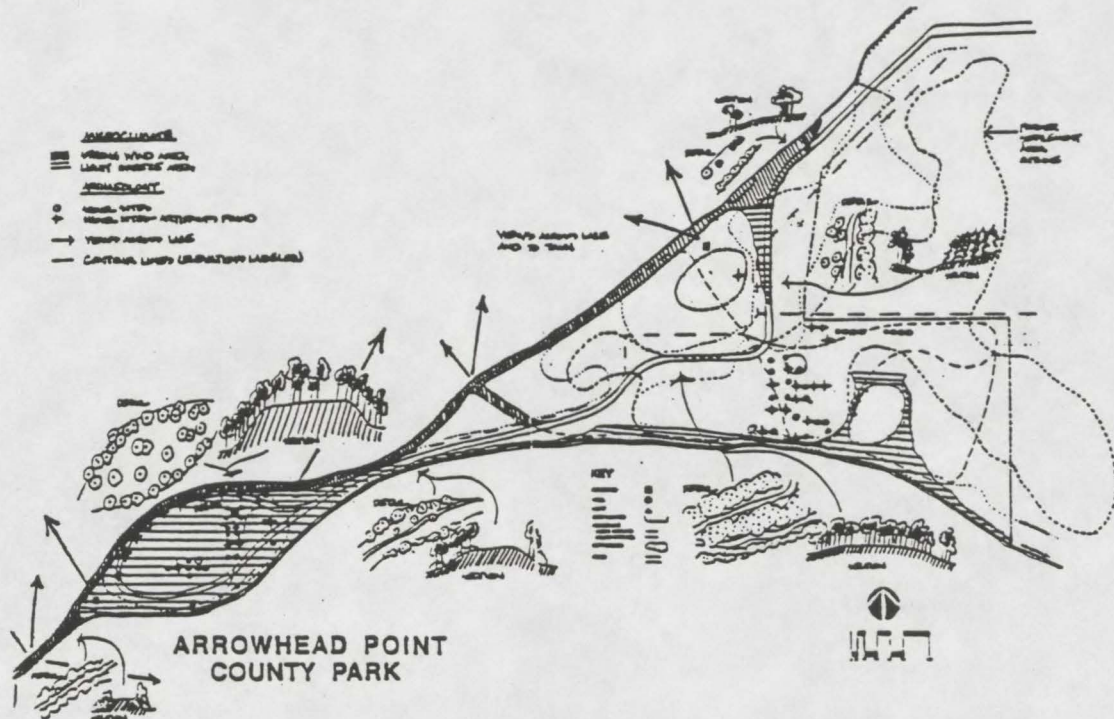
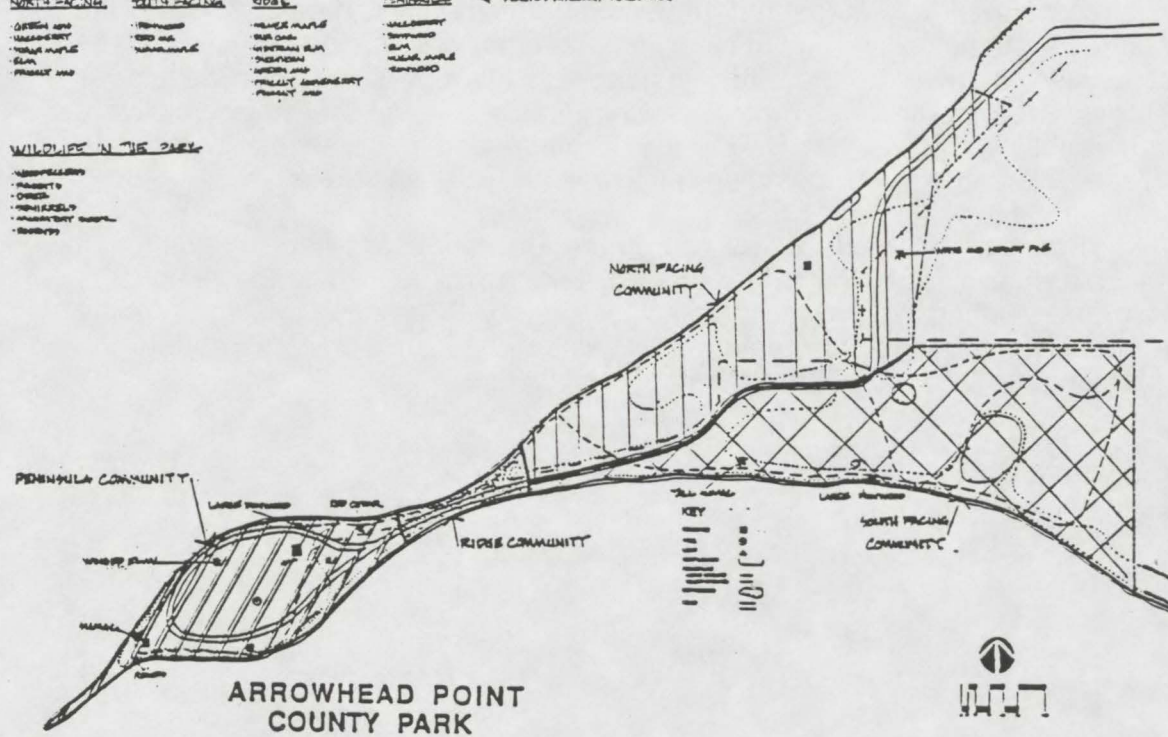


Figure 50. Analysis of Arrowhead Point County Park.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

The design strategies revolve around three central themes which could enhance the park's features and address the community's interests. Since the park has a strong personality of its own, no attempt was made to create a stage set to superimpose on the site. Instead, an attempt is made to develop a framework supporting different community activities. All the strategies were designed to work whether the lake is drained and restored or not, and to increase the park's visual communication with the lake and the town.

While the park is well-tended, some opportunities for improvement are desirable regardless of the overall strategy taken. These include the removal of the green hunting house, the addition of signs with names significant to the Freeborn community, and creating a tree-lined entry drive that curves into the park along the lake to enhance the entry experience .

DESIGN STRATEGY A. NATURAL HISTORY DISCOVERY

The first design strategy emphasizes the park's geology and native plant and animal communities giving the visitor discovery opportunities. With the help of interpretive signs and trails, emphasis would be placed on the cultural legacy of the site by including an interpretive center that would house archaeological displays. Also, the local taxidermist could offer demonstrations.

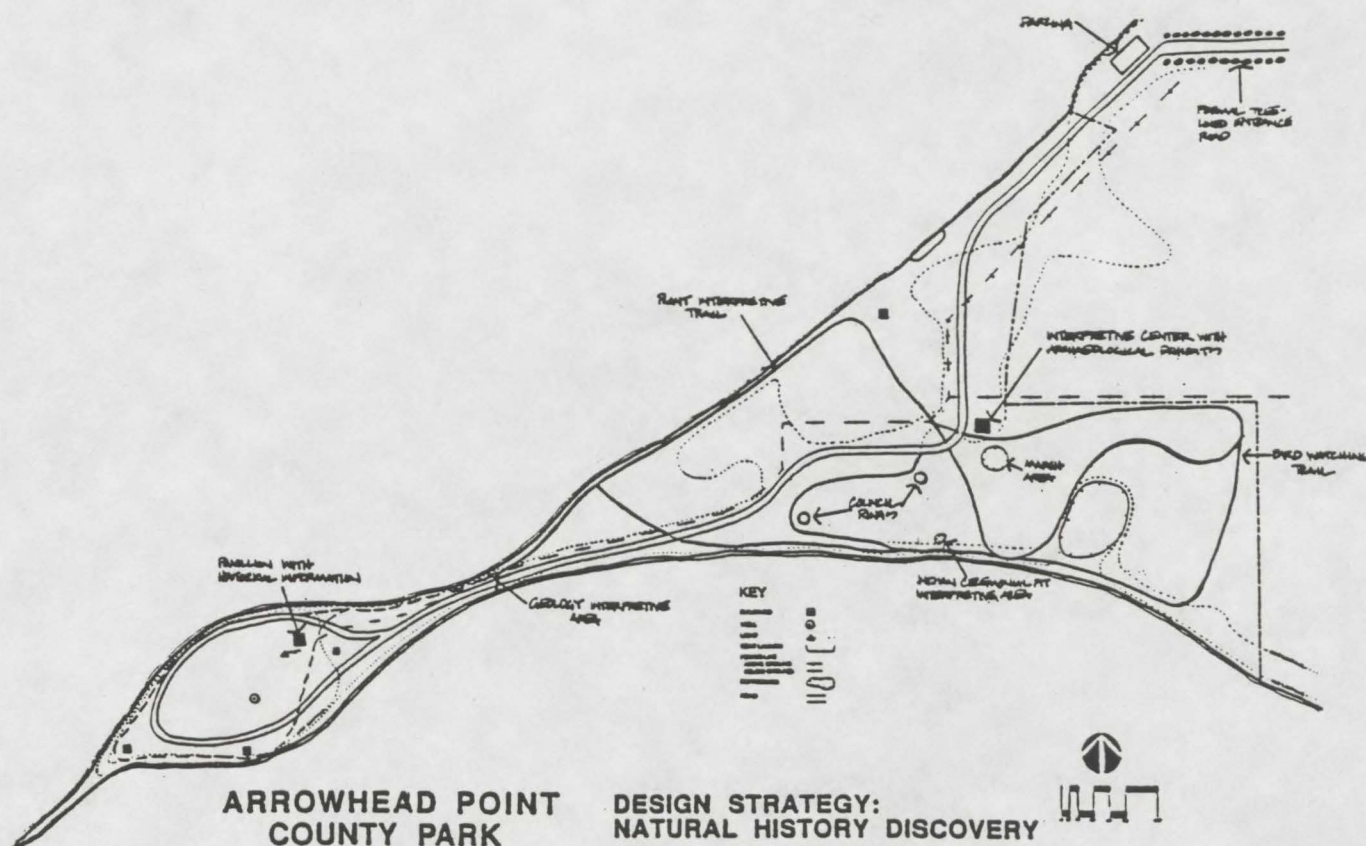


Figure 51. Design Strategy A: Natural History Discovery.

DESIGN STRATEGY B. RECREATION EMPHASIS

The next design strategy focuses on the community experience. A calendar year worth of community celebrations could be accommodated by this design such as the snowmobile roundup, a spring cotillion, Independence Day fireworks and a Christmas festival of lights. Small and large gathering spaces would be provided to accommodate such activities.

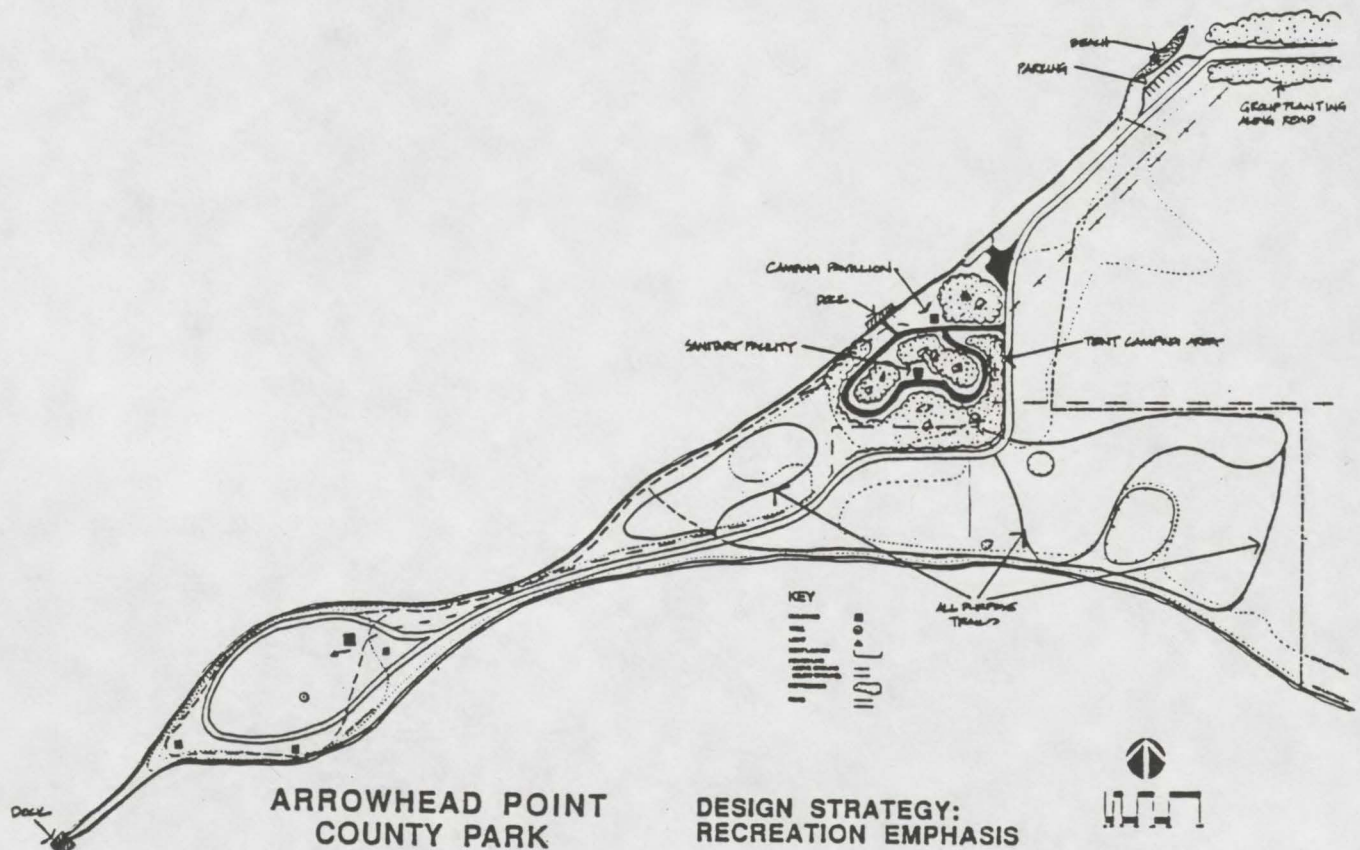


Figure 52. Design Strategy B: Recreation Emphasis.

DESIGN STRATEGY C. COMMUNITY CELEBRATIONS

The last design strategy focuses on recreation. Included within it would be active and passive activities for all age groups. Such activities might include hiking, biking, fishing, tent camping, skiing and boating. Other facilities provided could be camping areas, a fishing dock and tot lot.

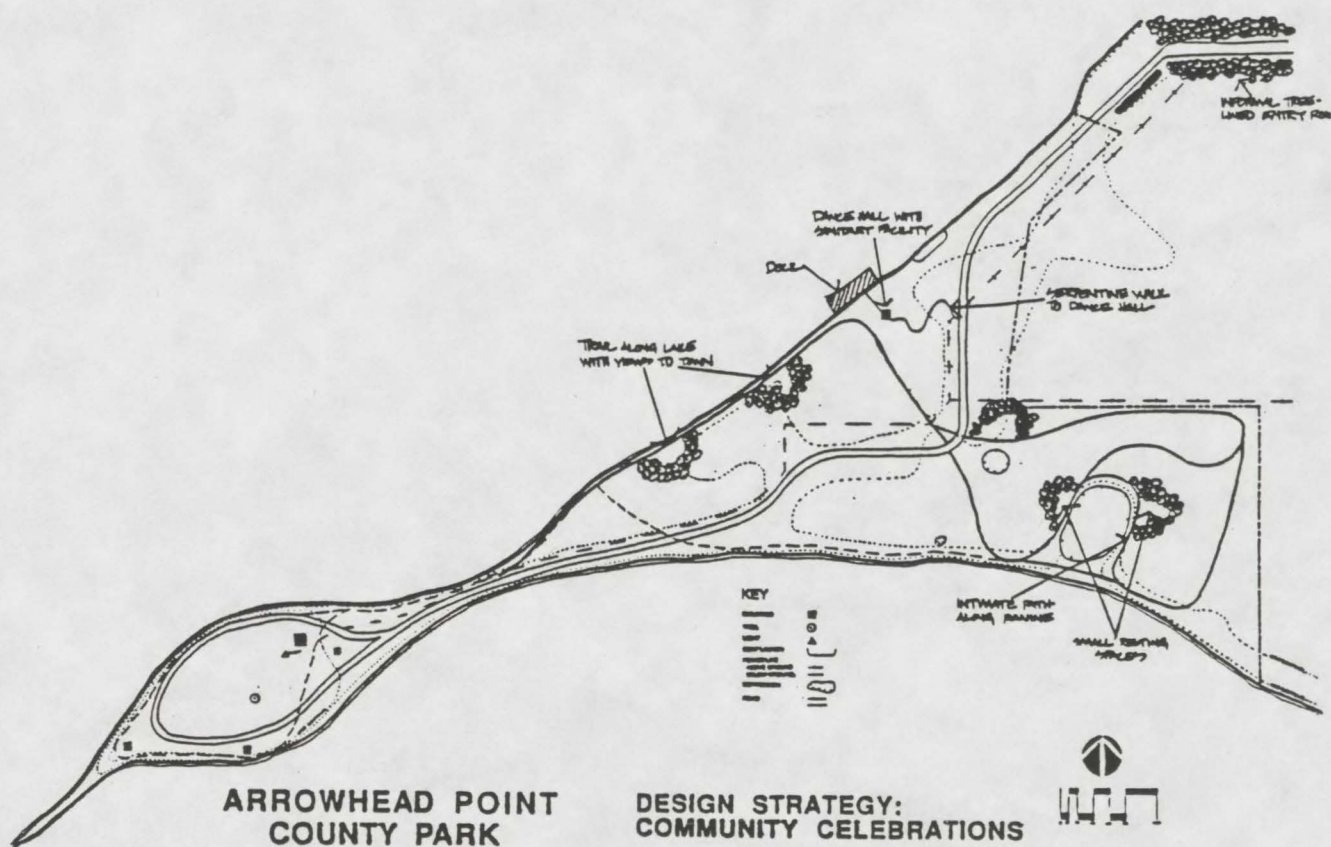


Figure 53. Design Strategy C: Community Celebrations.

DESIGN PROPOSALS

In the final phase of the design, each group member developed a proposal that fit into one of the three design strategies. The five areas of proposal include the entry, dance hall, woodland ravine, the north shore and the peninsula.

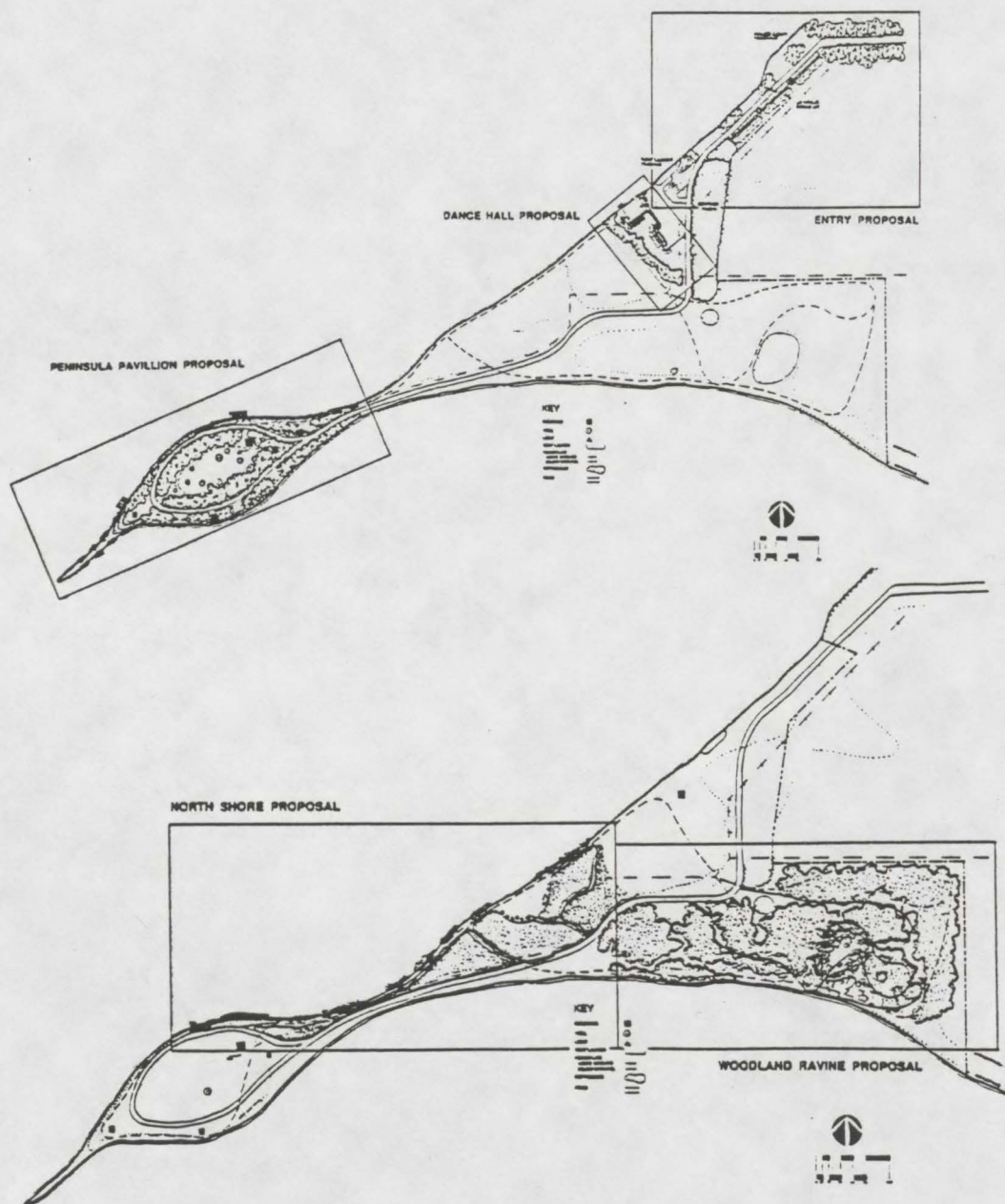


Figure 54. Locations of Proposals for Arrowhead Point Park.

PROPOSAL 1. ENTRY AND PARKING LOT

The Park is a beautiful place which should be reflected from the first moment the visitor enters the Park to ensure a lasting positive first impression. The main objective of this proposal is to enhance the current entry corridor. (located in figure 55) This could be done by adding plantings along the entry drive and along the lake edge to frame the lake views and by creating a grass lawn lakeshore for small gatherings. In addition, a sixty-space parking lot could be built and screened with vegetation in such a way that it would not interfere with views to the lake. The new parking lot could provide the boat launch with pull-through style parking for boats and trailers. The proposed entry drive would conclude with a gentle curve at the lake's edge and a powerful framed view of the lake. The grassy lawn on the lake edge also would be visible. The proposed functional organization of the entry area is indicated in a diagram in Figure 56 (top). The cross-section at the center of Figure 56 cuts from through the lake, the planted lawn, the parking lot and the vegetated slope. The bottom cross-section of Figure 56 looking along the length of parking lot towards the slope, indicates how evergreen plantings could be used to break up the parking lot into smaller less obtrusive sections. The top sketch of Figure 57 suggests a tree-lined entry drive into the park and the lower sketch shows one of the vies framed by well-tended trees and lawn.

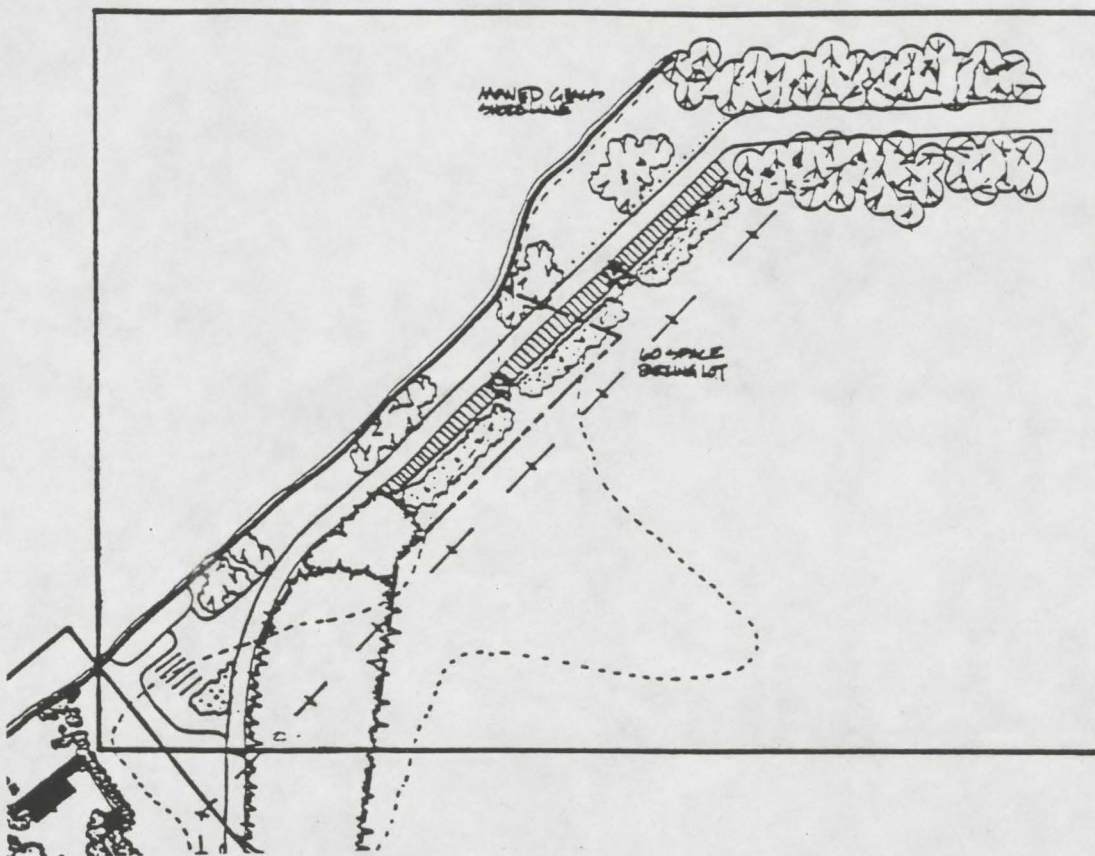


Figure 55. Arrowhead Point Park Entry Proposal Plan.

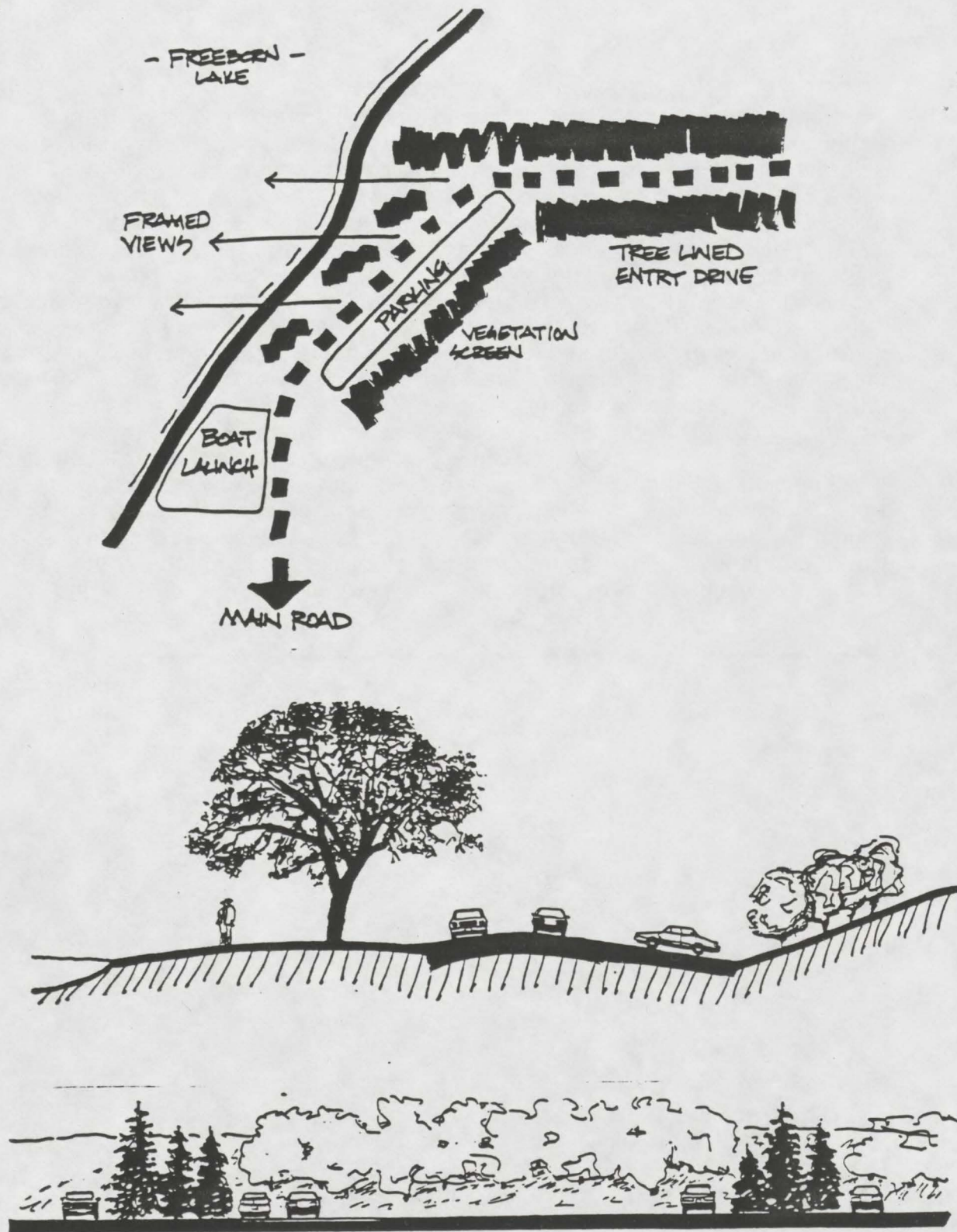


Figure 56. Park Entry Diagram and Cross-sections.

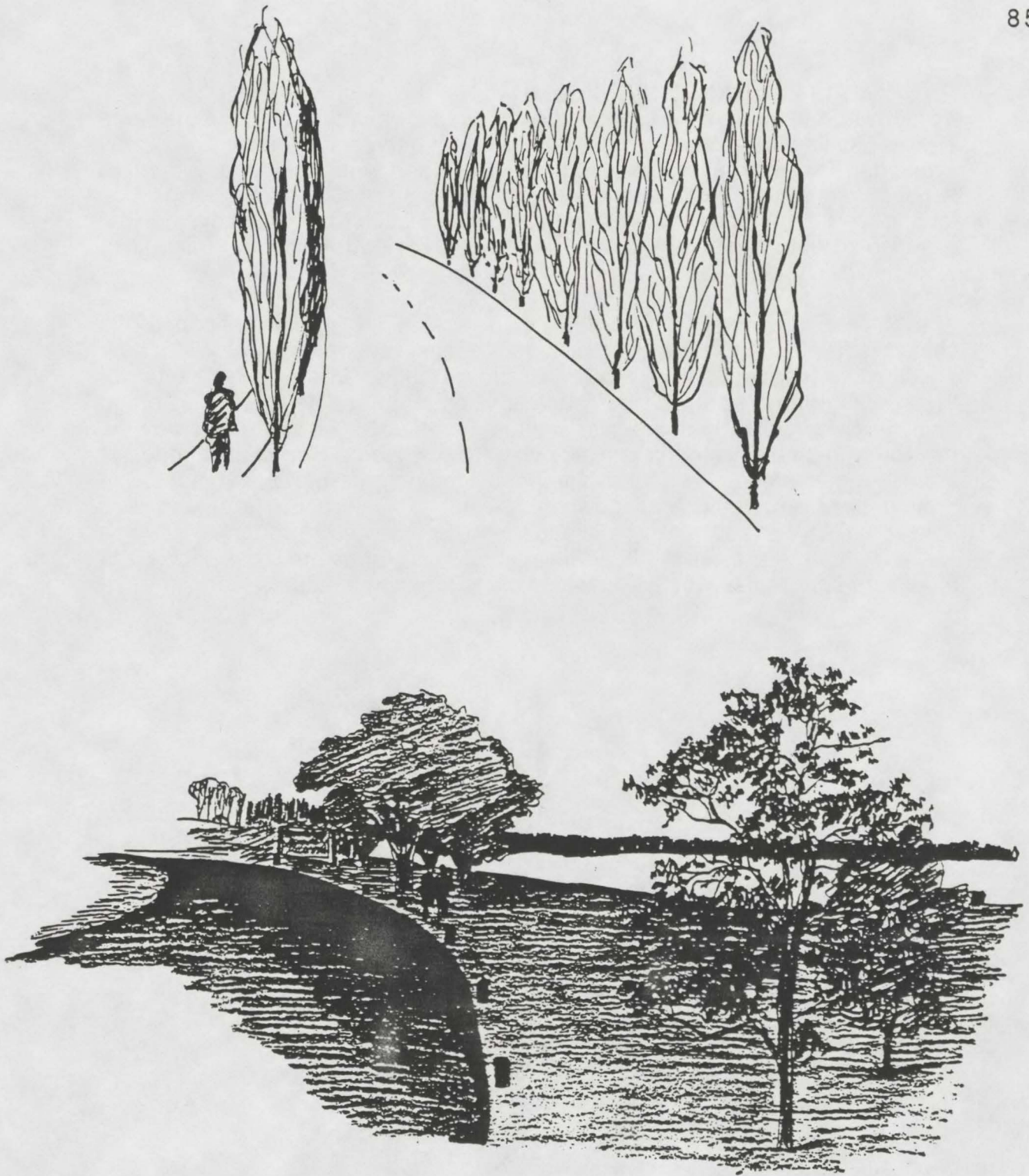


Figure 57. Tree-lined Entrance Road & View to Lake at Park Entry.

PROPOSAL 2. DANCE PAVILION

To provide a different style community gathering area in the park, the idea of a dance pavilion has been resurrected from yesteryear. A formal walkway promenade would be created from the tree-lined road to the pavilion. A wrought iron entrance arch would welcome the dance couples from the parking lot and lead them along the winding handicapped-accessible walk covered with a series of bittersweet vine-draped arbors. Overhead lights and luminaries would guide the way.

The pavilion (located in figure 58) would replace the present hilltop picnic shelter (shown in Figure 59 top) that is an area that is under-utilized. From here spectacular views of the lake are possible as shown in the lower sketch of Figure 59. With creation of the dance pavilion more people would be able to enjoy this view throughout the year. A front porch effect would be given by the pavilion with archways that frame lake views. With the pavilion placed on top of the hill, a marvelous view of the lake is provided, and casual promenades with resting benches would lead down to the lake. Figure 60 (top) shows a conceptual layout and the promenades leading from the road to the pavilion and down to the lake. At the bottom of figure 60 is a series of cross sections of the varied spaces that would be created along the promenade.

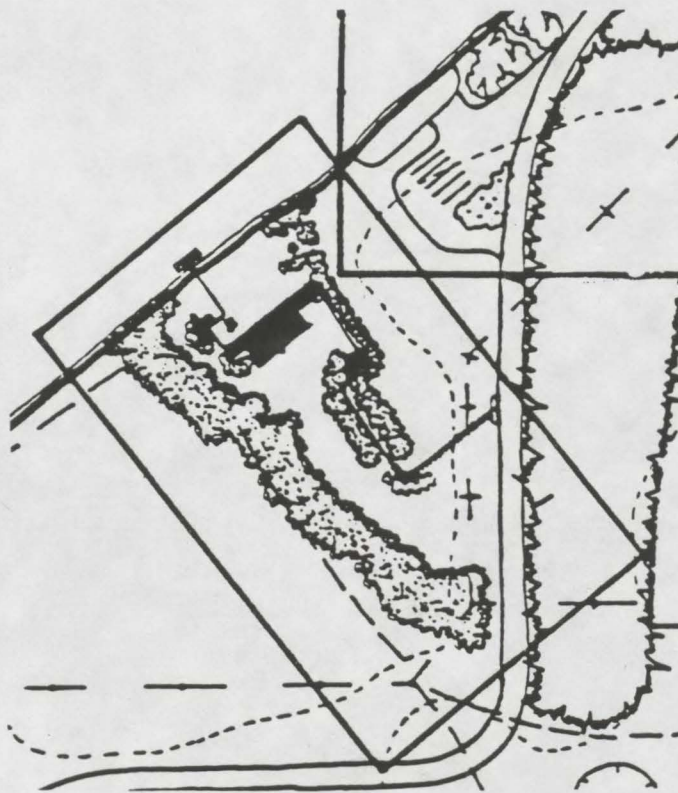


Figure 58. Arrowhead Point Park Dance Pavilion Plan.

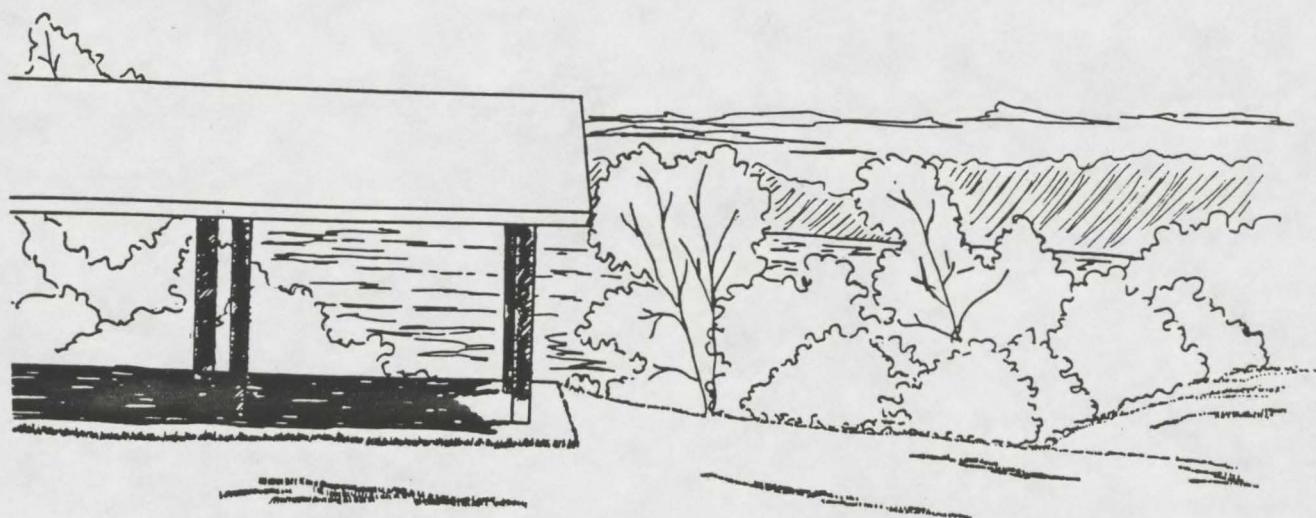


Figure 59. Existing Picnic Shelter Where Pavilion is Proposed.

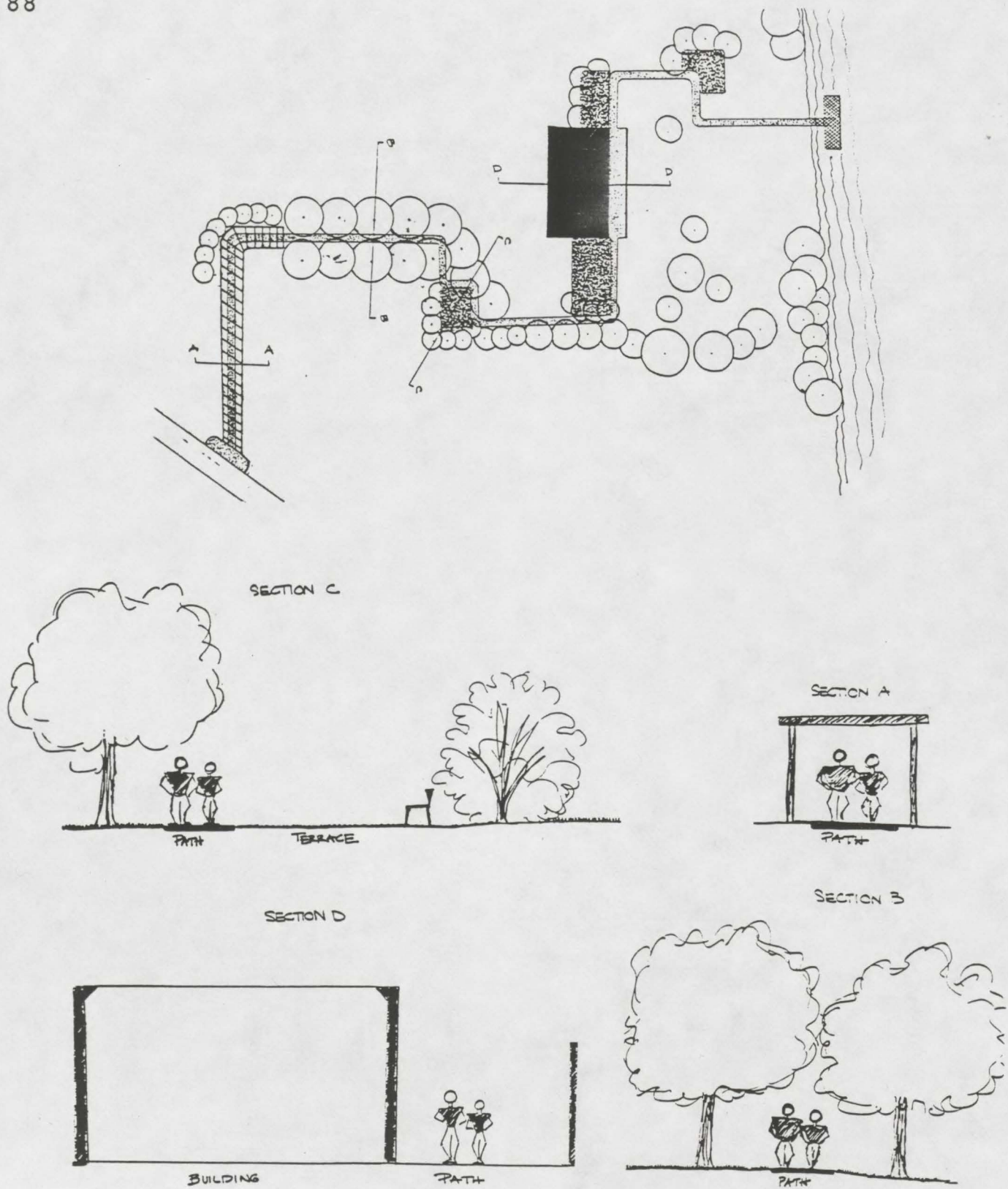


Figure 60. Plan & Cross-sections of Pavilion & Promenade.

PROPOSAL 3. WOODLAND RAVINE

The southeastern quadrant of Arrowhead Point County Park (located in Figure 61) and called here the Woodland Ravine) has a rich combination of vegetation and topography which remains unknown and unvisited by most park users. This proposal is intended to demonstrate recreation and environmental education opportunities that exist in these areas. The proposed improvements would enhance the qualities unique to these areas through mass planting and selective clearing of vegetation to better accentuate the important aspects of the remaining vegetation, to create views, and to emphasize microclimate. Interpretive signs would be used to educate the visitor about each of these areas as well as specific plant and animal habitats.

This part of Arrowhead Point Park is very interesting and diverse, but needs additional research regarding the existing plant communities before any major changes to these communities are undertaken.

Figure 62 (top) shows the proposed trails in relation to the areas of different vegetation and the oval shaped ravine. The lower map notes suggested changes to the vegetation and it also indicates where the cross-sections of Figure 63 are located. The general topography and vegetation are represented by north-south and east-west cross-section drawings of Figure 63.

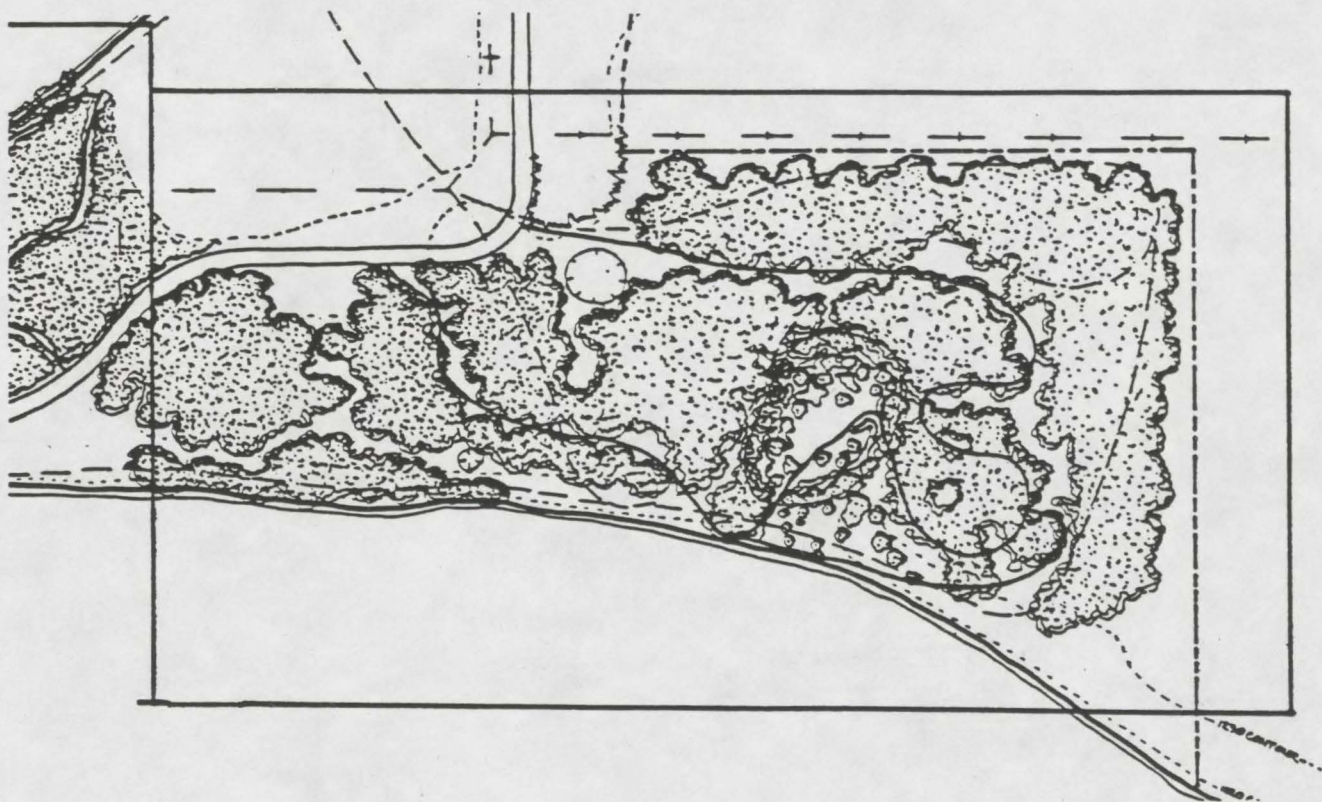


Figure 61. Woodland Ravine Area Plan.

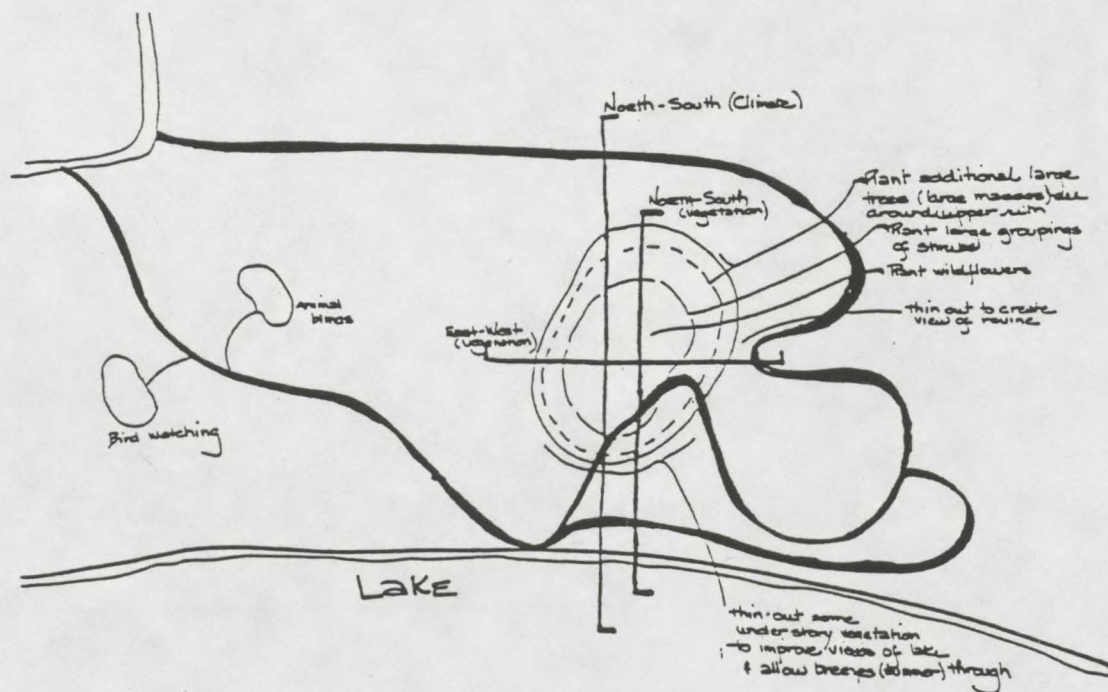
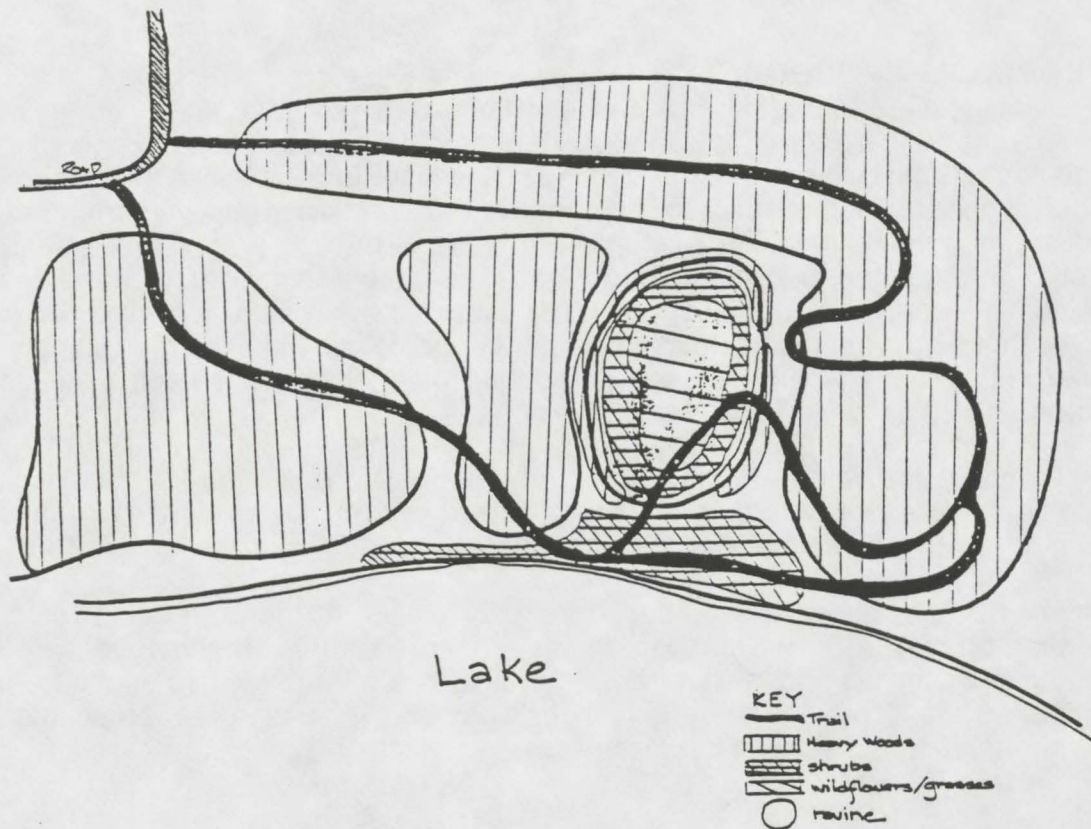


Figure 62. Woodland Ravine. Vegetation Analysis & Proposals.

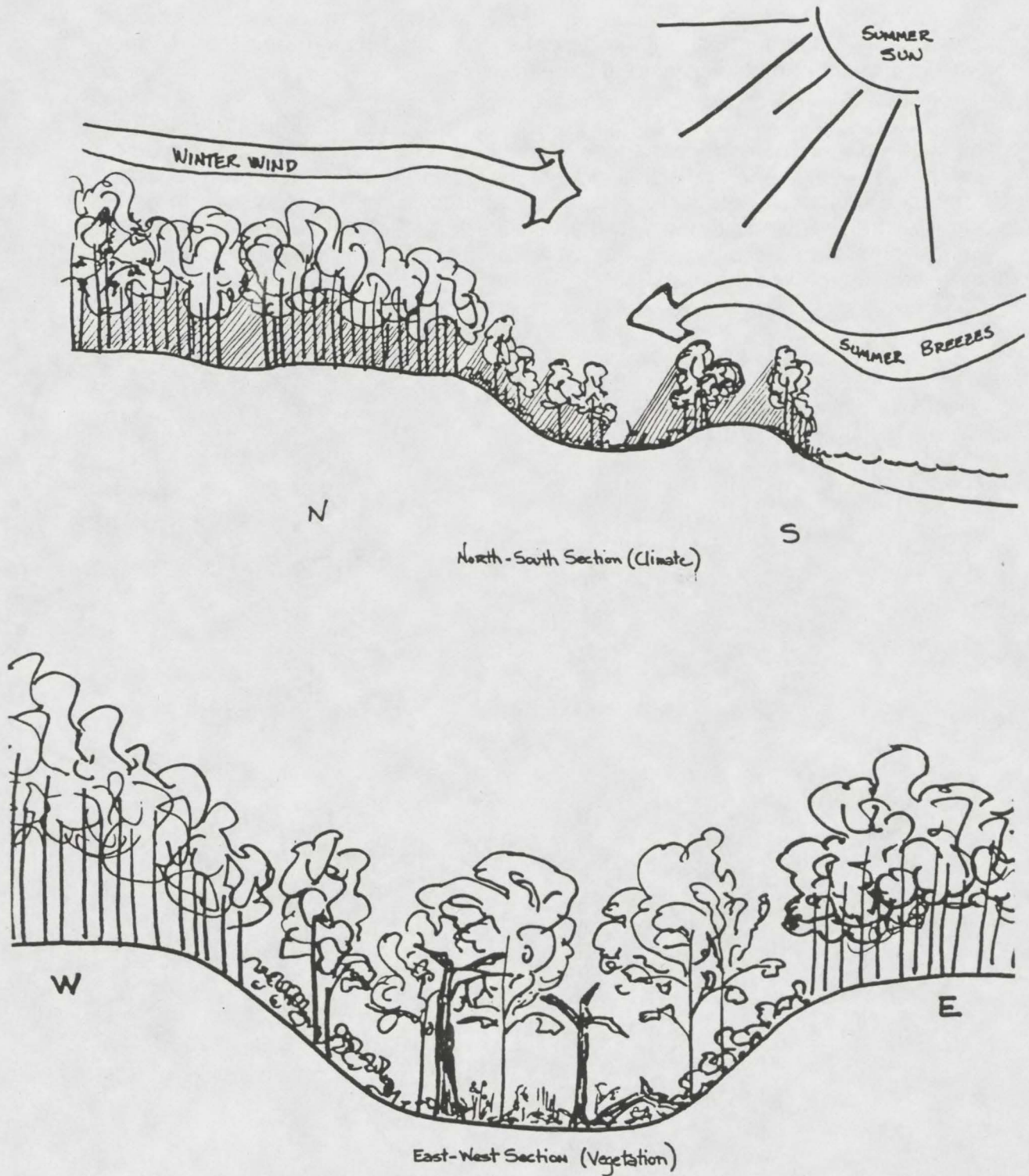


Figure 63. Cross-sections of Woodland Ravine Area.

Some examples of the beautiful qualities that exist in the woodland ravine areas are illustrated in Figure 64. Typical summer and winter paths through the woods provide outstanding natural experiences.

The ravine or bowl-shaped topography is truly a unique feature to be highlighted. It could be enhanced by including a path on the bottom and patches of wildflowers and additional shrubs along the middle sections. Other proposed enhancements include stairs up and out of the bowl to the rim path and another set leading down to the lake's edge. Selective thinning of trees and shrubs would promote better views of the lake and allow the summer breezes to come into the area.

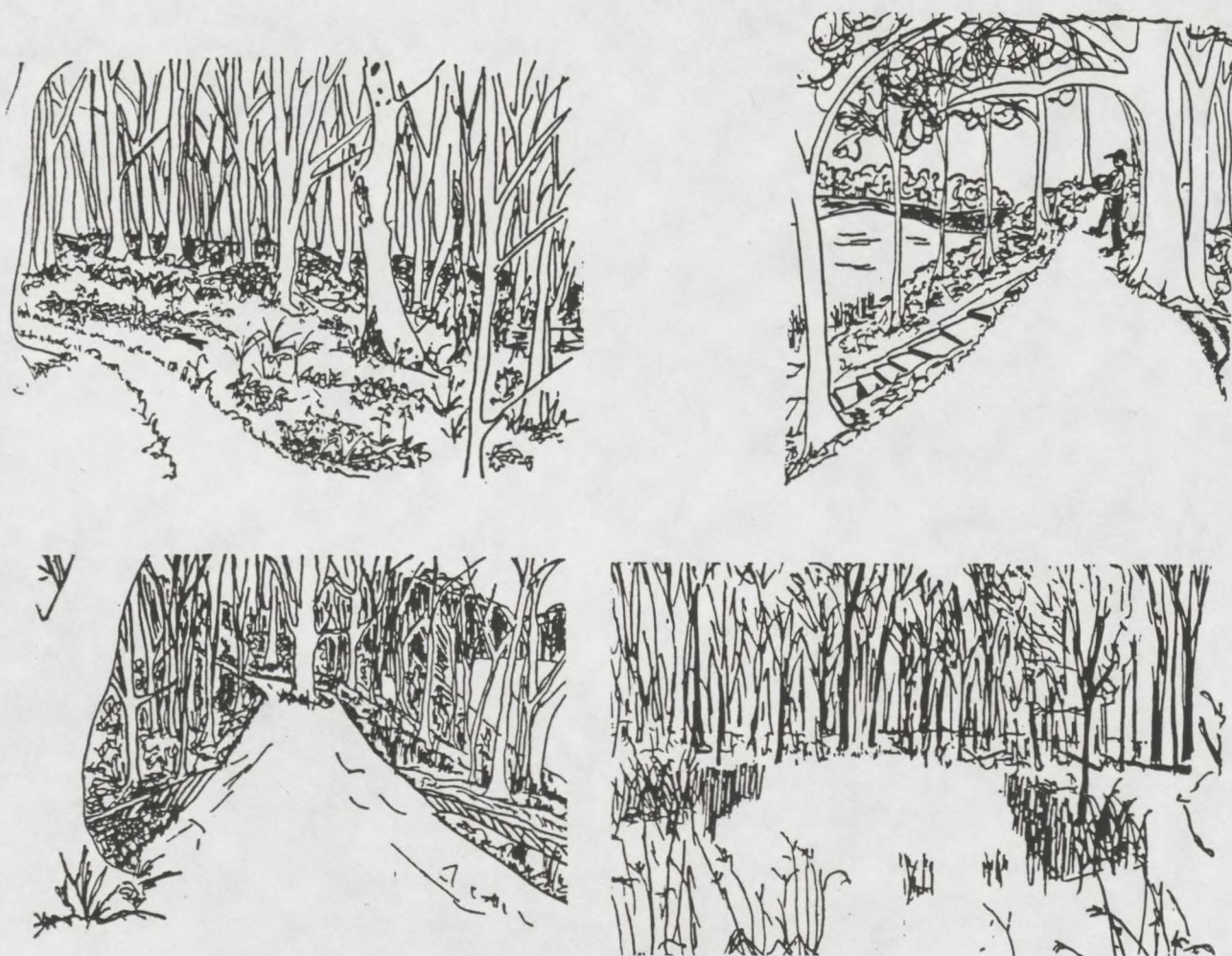


Figure 64. Images of Enhanced Woodland Ravine Area.

PROPOSAL 4. NORTH SHORE TRAIL

The north-facing shore of Arrowhead Point County Park (located in Figure 65) include three very distinct areas: a densely wooded area with a gentle slope to the shore on the main peninsula; the narrow, pressure ridge area with a very gentle slope on the shoreline; and finally, the main high point with very steep slopes near the water. This diversity presents an opportunity for creating a trail through these various landforms and vegetation while experiencing the lake as much as possible.

The trail would begin at the east in the wooded area (Figure 67 top) where visitors could casually stroll and relax while enjoying the light and shadows of the trees and their coolness in the summer. The trail would be connected to the existing road to increase the accessibility. Another trail along the shoreline would go through the wooded area where one would see glimpses of the lake through the trees. These two trails would lead to a grassy area that opens out to the lake (Figure 66 top and Figure 67 middle). Here, visitors could enjoy various activities such as catch or frisbee under the sun or trees around the open area. From here to the pressure ridge, the trail would follow the shoreline with open views toward the lake and through the thin screen of trees.

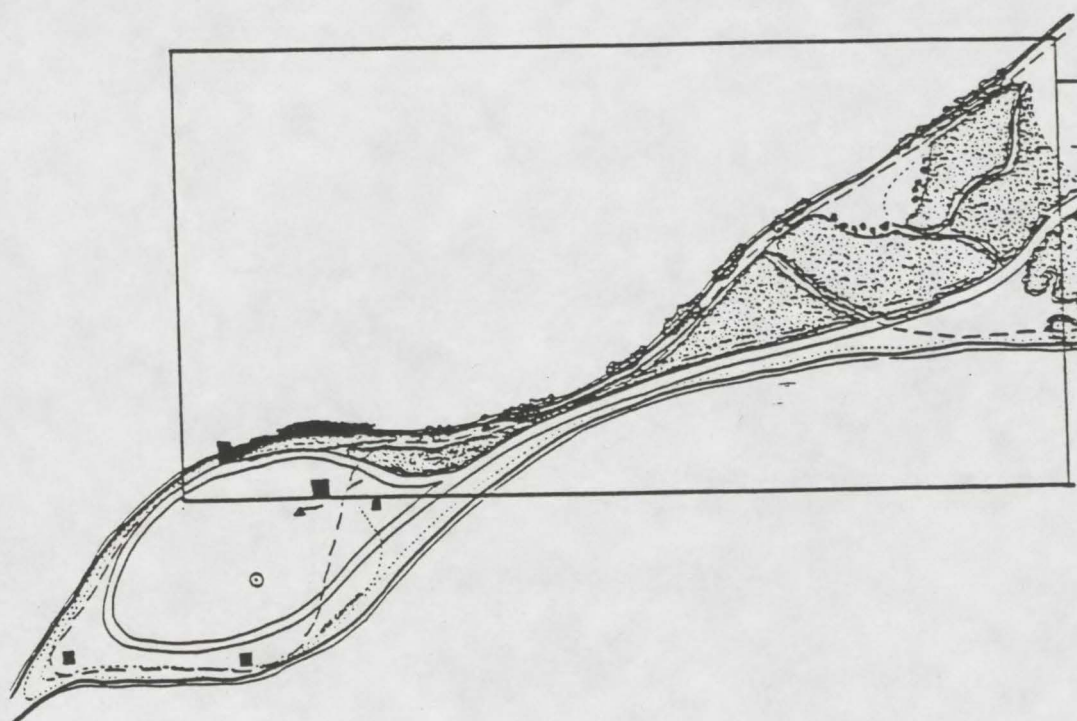
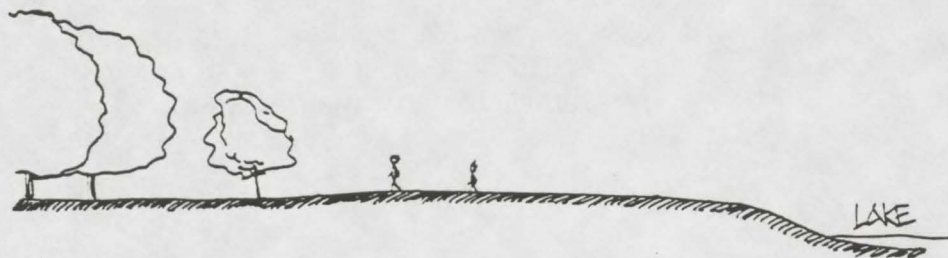


Figure 65. Arrowhead Point North Shore Trail Proposal

When the proposed trail reaches the lowest area on the pressure ridge, the slope starts getting extremely steep, so a boardwalk would be placed along the bottom of the slope on top of rock fill (Figure 66 bottom and Figure 67 bottom). The rocks would absorb the pressure from the lake's powerful summer waves and winter ice that would otherwise destroy a trail and, if necessary, the boards could be lifted each fall and easily reset each spring. An extraordinary trail ending could occur at the most steep part of the slope where a stairway is proposed to lead to a platform at the top of the peninsula providing a breathtaking view of the lake.

OPEN AREA SECTION



BOARD WALK SECTION

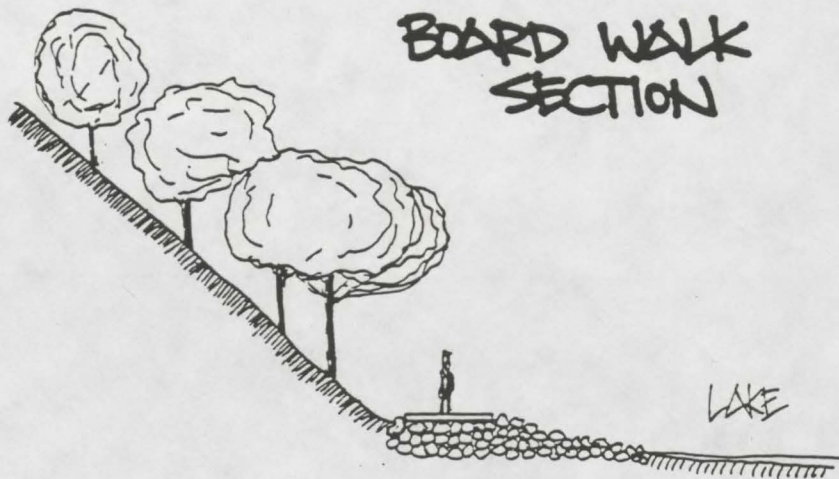


Figure 66. Cross-sections of Proposed North Shore Trail.



Figure 67. Images along Proposed North Shore Trail.

PROPOSAL 5. PENINSULA AS PAVILION

The final proposal to be presented is for the area considered a most favorite place by local residents and visitors alike. This design is inspired by the unique landform itself--a high, oval mound perched above the surrounding lake and narrowly connected to the mainland. This is a very special place with remarkable ancient, specimen-sized trees. Perhaps because the peninsula is nearly surrounded by water or once was an island, these trees escaped prairie fires and may be among the oldest in the region. The design (as shown in Figure 69) is based on enhancement of this island-like landform in combination with its use as a gathering and celebration place. By treating the whole "island" as a pavilion, the design celebrates its landform.

The existing road would be like a ring separating an inner grove of trees from an intermittently perforated outer grove. Three openings in the shoreline trees are evenly sited on each side, with the outer two on the north, Freeborn-facing side leading down to celebration docks at the shore edge. Each of these openings represents a small room between the columns of trees, almost like a porch facing out on the large expanse of water. A pair of lights is placed in each opening, and there is enough room for benches and picnic tables. These rooms will be inviting for smaller groups and provide an intimate scale, with large views to the outside. The sketch below in Figure 68 illustrates the opening towards the city of Freeborn.

Inside the road ring, the delightful grove of trees remains, with more trees added over time towards the road edge. As replanting becomes necessary as the trees age, the offspring of the older existing trees should be planted, both to maintain the vegetation and to signify the continuance of "families" through successive generations.



Figure 68. View Out Peninsula Opening Towards Freeborn.

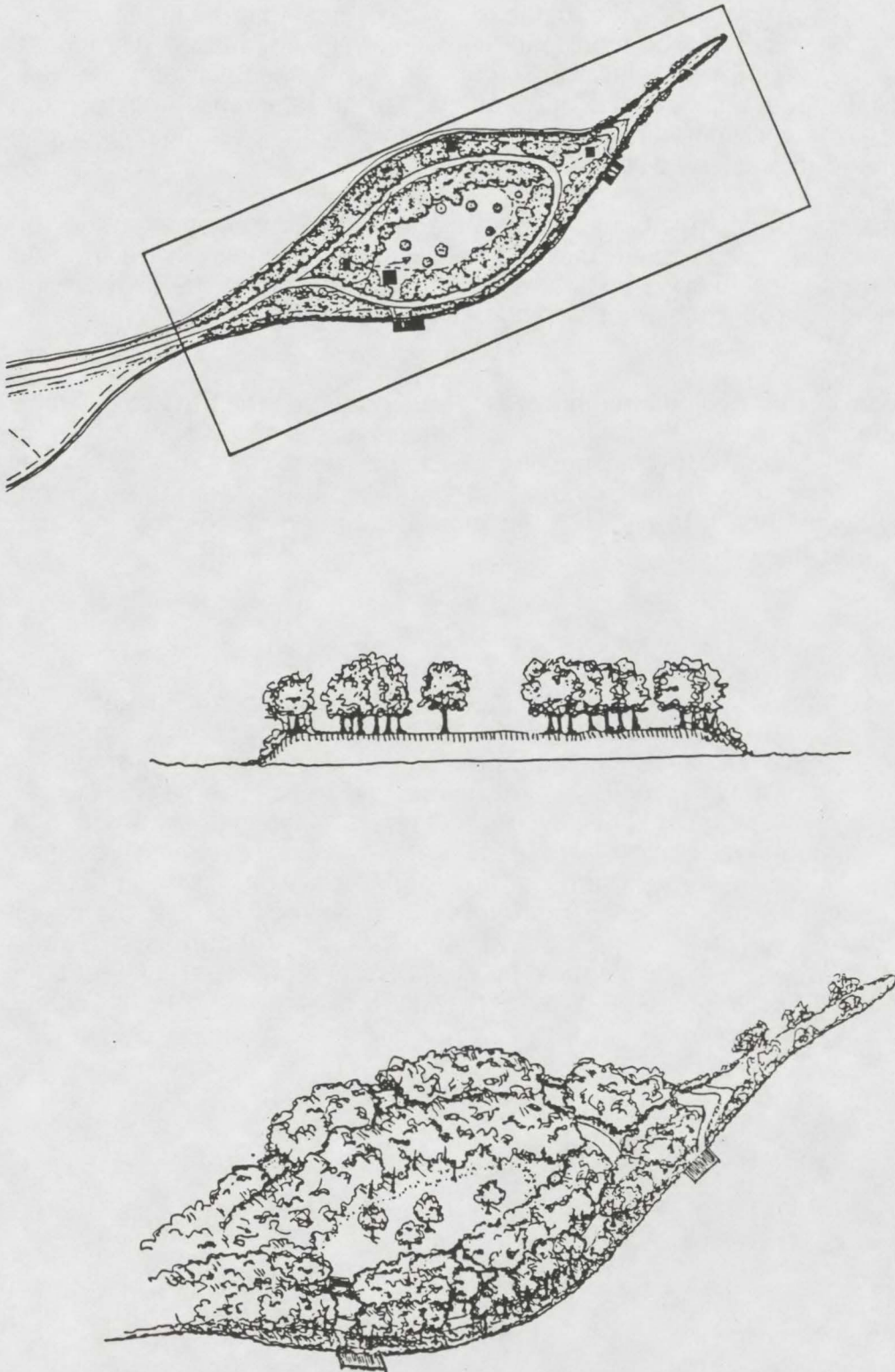


Figure 69. Plan, Cross-section and Bird's-eye View of Peninsula.

The present structures inside the road ring have not been altered in this design. The only additions would be more park lights intermittently placed throughout. A council ring or fire ring (shown in Figure 70 top) of about twenty-five feet diameter is suggested near the apex of the central opening. Another path would circle the open core, inside the inner grove, winding past the council ring to cross the road and lead down to the point.

Out on the narrow spit of land or point, staggered pairs of openings in the vegetation could be continued, down to the point of the apex. Terracing and accessible paths could be developed to bring the visitor down the hill from the picnic shelter, through columns of vegetation, and to the middle of the lake. (See Figure 70, lower sketch).

This design would involve clearing of slope vegetation, which must be done with caution. Shorelines are fragile communities, and are susceptible to erosion. This design would not require clearing down to the shore but rather selective clearing to create the 'room with a view'. Taller plant materials that block views would be replaced with low materials having fibrous root systems which can stabilize slopes.

CONCLUSION

Arrowhead Point County Park is a place to be treasured and enjoyed. It exemplifies ancient forces at work as evidenced in its rich geological, botanical, and archaeological treasures. Yet, the park should also exemplify progressive management of public resources. The shore and vegetation need not only preservation and restoration, but a program of reforestation with seedlings from the park's unique vegetation should be undertaken. New activities and facilities, such as the entry road, parking, dance pavilion, trails, and other features described here, are appropriate as long as they can be integrated without damaging the park's natural and cultural resources. These opportunities as well as others should be evaluated and prioritized by Freeborn and the county and a long term plan for the future of Arrowhead Point County Park should be developed.



Figure 70. Council Ring & Point at Arrowhead Point Park.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This report is a compilation of the design proposals of twenty landscape architecture students. Many alternative ways to enhance the Freeborn area are presented here. Aspects of many different designs are expected to be appealing, yet none of these plans is expected to be directly implemented. The community is advised to use these designs as an inspiration source of ideas to further efforts to plan and to fund community improvements. By carefully evaluating and discussing these student ideas, a clearer understanding can be developed on how to best prioritize efforts.

In evaluating these proposals, careful attention needs to be given to practical considerations including the need for land or easement acquisition, phased implementation, and the cost and maintenance implications of the designs. Just as important, care needs to be given that any final plans result in a cohesive design, well integrated with the surrounding community. These design ideas should be used to generate discussion and build consensus before proceeding to secure project support and funding. Freeborn is urged to work with professionals (including landscape architects) on any projects to develop the final plans, cost estimates, and implementation details to assure the best integration of features that will last long into the future.

Many of the proposals presented here represent ambitious schemes for the future of Freeborn. Such efforts are possible, but require the cooperation and commitment of local residents, businesses, organizations, and property owners as well as local and state agencies and other project supporters. For Freeborn to set far reaching goals is appropriate. Then implementation can be planned incrementally as funding and maintenance support allows, with each of these steps fitting into a long term vision for Freeborn.